“The meeting presents a tremendous year-end buying opportunity,” Seldin said. “We have more than 550 exhibitors and 1,500 booths, as well as over 900 courses ranging from seminars to hands-on workshops.”

Courses are being offered in Spanish as well as English, a feature Seldin credited for the show’s ability to attract so many attendees from other countries.

“We make a strong effort to promote the meeting in other countries,” added general chairman John S. McIntyre. “Our emphasis is international as well as domestic.”

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was the guest speaker at the president’s luncheon, held Monday, November 26. Meredith Viera, current “Today Show” co-host, head of the afternoon game show “Who Wants to Be A Millionaire,” and former panelist on the morning kaf- feeklatch program “The View,” was the featured speaker at the event.

“We welcome the Big Apple,” Bloomberg said before adding, jok- ingly, “People send a lot of money while you’re here. We need the sales tax revenue.”

Luncheon emcee McIntyre presented an “I Love New York” sweatshirt to NYU School of Dentistry Dean Charles Bertolami and thanked Sullivan Schein for the company’s ongoing support for both the GNYDM and the president’s luncheon. He also presented a player’s card to Max Seldin, the Latin American Dental Association, FOLA (Federación Odontologica Latinoamericana) in honor of the organization’s 90th anniversary.

Viera, who spoke with Dental Tribune America’s today newspaper after her QA-style presentation, said she rarely gives speeches like the one she gave at the president’s luncheon.

“I don’t do a lot at all, because my time is so limited,” she said. “But this seemed like an interesting or- ganization, and the timing of the event was such that I felt I could do it. But I don’t do very many. Depend- ing on the audience, you may tweak [your speech], but most people just want to know your story.”

Referring to her recent dental visit for her cracked tooth, she said, “Teeth are important. I try to be good and see my dentist regularly.” Then she added with a chuckle, “What do you think I’m going to tell you?”

Viera has interviewed scores of celebrities, many of whom sport blindingly white movie star smiles.

“You sometimes start looking at the teeth,” she said. “People will look to see: ‘Has this one had plastic surgery?’ In the same way, you sometimes look at teeth and say, ‘Are those real, or are they fake?’ If they look fake, that’s no good. So the best dentists are the ones that make them look real. If you see the real white, white ones, it’s like, hmmm.”

She includes her own Manhattan dentist in the “best” category.

“Mostly my family has been scared of the dentist,” said the mother of three. “My middle guy, 80-80. After Lillie, my daughter, had her first time at the dentist, the dentist said he’d never met such a tough kid. No novocaine, nothing. She’s a tough cookie. Our dentist here in Manhattan is Dr. Jed Best. He’s pheno- menal. He’s made it a positive experi- ence. Even Ben now, my oldest is fine. Of course now he’s on his way to college and he’s an adult.”

A rainstorm on the 26th put a damper on show floor attendance, some exhibitors said, but they cor- rectly predicted that Tuesday traffic would rebound.

“Sunday was a madhouse. Mon- day was really slow, and today is also quiet,” one exhibitor said on the 27th. “Wednesday should be really hectic because people do stay away because of the rain try to see all the exhibits before the show ends. We’re hoping for good customer interest of course, but it’s the old story that ei- ther the hall seems dead or you’re swamped. You’re either scrambling to answer questions or you worry that you’re not reaching people.”

Companies in all branches of dentistry and related services pre- sented an array of products on the floor of the Javits Center. Melanie Holscher, territory manager for Sol- metex, said interest in the Solmetex H5 amalgam separator is high because of tougher state regulations against mercury waste from dental offices. Both New York and New Jer- sey are implementing strict new regulations, making the Greater New York Dental Meeting ideal for showcasing the technology.

Kurara used a six-foot tall robot to attract customers and emphasize its reputation for high technology. Regional manager Dan Bazzano said a lot of people are looking at Clearfil Majesty Flow, the company’s new restorative composite resin.

Another product that attracted at- tention because of its physical ap- pearance was Discus Dental’s Zoom, its lamp and tooth whitening system. “This is our big new product,” a floor representative said. “It’s what we’re emphasizing and what is attracting the most attention.”

A maturing population that has more disposable income drove inter- est in sophisticated new over-the-counter products. “People are flock- ing to us,” said Lisa Noebeling, vice president of international sales for La- ckle Inc.’s Biotene. “Dry mouth is be- coming more and more of a problem as the American population matures.”

DOC at GNYDM

During a trade seminar on Nov. 26, The Department of Commerce (DOO) encouraged American den- tal manufacturers to export to over- seas markets. Although the U.S. re- mains the world’s largest national market for dental products, its share of the global market is shrinking, a trend that can only grow as the middle class increases in other nations and regions.

N. Gerard Zapiain, medical de- vice specialist for DOC’s Interna- tional Trade Administration, noted that the global market for medical devices is growing at 4.5 percent annually. It has climbed from around $150 billion in 2004 to $170 billion in 2007 and should approach $180 billion by 2009.

America is the world’s largest producer of medical devices, ac- counting for 45 percent of the global market. American medical device manufacturers’ spending on re- search and development doubled during the 1990s and is three times higher than what American compa- nies in general spend on R&D.

However, new markets are grow- ing as other nation’s middle classes become larger and their per capita expenditures on health care grow. At present, the U.S. leads the world on personal health expenditures ($5,000), followed by Western Eu- rope ($2,000).

Zapiain cautioned that Russia is not yet a significant market for den- tal equipment, but Russia should grow because of its large population and vast resources.

Latin America presents U.S. compa- nies with a “hodgepodge” of regu- latory systems. Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and Paraguay have no medical device regulations. In contrast, Chile, Argentina, Mexi- co and Brazil have what Zapiain considers “tough regulations.”

Brazil’s economic crisis has de- pressed imports, but its medical devices market is the eighth largest in the world, more than $2.7 billion as of 2004. Seventy per- cent of the market is supplied domes- tically. The U.S. is the largest foreign supplier, followed by Ger- many and Japan.

For more on the Greater New York Dental Meeting, see page 17.

Dental Tribune Managing Editor Matt Connor contributed to this story.