Make 2010 the year to ‘go green’

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

Are you green? Not green with envy or green with food poisoning — we’re talking green for the environment.

The Eco-Dentistry Association (EDA), an organization that offers dental professionals practical tips on reducing waste and pollution and conserving resources, is urging clinicians to make 2010 the year to “go green” and “save green.”

After all, it’s a new year and a chance for a fresh start. Not only can you help save the planet, but according to the EDA, you can save lots of money as well — as much as $50,000 a year.

According to the EDA, the green movement in dentistry is gathering steam. Since its international launch in the spring of 2009, the EDA has enrolled hundreds of members in 42 states and 11 countries. In addition, many companies have recently introduced green dental innovations, including such things as LED operator lights that use less energy to operate.

“Dental professionals can powerfully differentiate themselves by going green, making them a magnet for the millions of values-based consumers who seek service providers who share their environmental and wellness values,” the EDA explained.

“Even small changes, such as switching from chemical sterilization processes to steam, yield operating savings of $828 a year, while making the switch to digital imaging — including the initial costs of the equipment investment — yields more than $8,700 in yearly supply and other savings,” the EDA said.

Here are a few more things you should know about the EDA:

• The EDA offers dental professionals advice that is practical and easy to implement, such as setting photocopiers to make double-sided copies, properly disposing of mercury-containing dental waste and using planet-friendly building and office methods, such as nontoxic paint and electronic patient communications.

• The EDA also provides the public with information about such things as digital X-ray systems, which reduce radiation exposure by up to 90 percent, and dental appliances that are free from the hormone-disrupting chemical bisphenol-A, which is found in many plastics, as well as offering them questions to ask their practitioners about environmental stewardship.

In addition, the association’s Web site allows eco-conscious consumers to search for eco-friendly dental professionals in their area.

• The EDA’s members hail from all over, including places such as Waxahachie, Texas; Beachwood, Ohio; and Fort Bragg, N.C.

For more information about the Eco-Dentistry Association, visit the Web site at www.ecodentistry.org.

The Latin American dental leadership is also putting together teams of dental volunteers to travel to Haiti once the major health and humanitarian crisis is under control to attend to the dental needs of the population. Rodriguez is also putting together dental professionals from Brazil, Uruguay and Costa Rica, among others, who share their environmental and wellness values.

“Dental Tribune is publicizing its worldwide print and online editions the campaign for Haiti.

At a meeting in Panama, Rodriguez received the support of the presidents of Central American dental associations, and made an emotional appeal to dental manufacturers to donate much needed supplies. He said Colgate has already agreed to donate brushes and toothpaste.

Rodriguez added he was moved to witness dental professionals from countries with little resources, such as Honduras, Nicaragua or El Salvador, say they will collect funds, second-hand equipment and dental supplies to help their Haitian colleagues.

Some prominent Latin American dental professionals from Brazil, Uruguay and Costa Rica, among their practices and we were thinking about how to help them. It’s very good news to know that FOLA, FDI and Dental Tribune are trying to help Haitian dentists.” If dentists know “that help is on the way, they can have hope!”

FOLA president Adolfo Rodriguez, center, asks for help for Haiti at a meeting in Panama. He’s surrounded by the president, right, and vice president of the Panama Dental Association.

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