



Hinman Dental Meeting Announces Retirement of Long-Time Executive Director Sylvia Ratchford

- Hinman Names Annette Sullivan as Incoming Executive Director -

ATLANTA (Sep. 21, 2020) – **The Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting** – one of the nation’s largest dental meetings – announced today that its long-time **Executive Director, Sylvia Ratchford**, will retire in May 2021, following her 25th Hinman Dental Meeting. Ratchford has led the Hinman Dental Meeting and Hinman Dental Society since 1996. She will continue to serve in the role in some capacity through May alongside her successor, Annette Sullivan, who has been named Incoming Executive Director.

Under Ratchford’s leadership and during her tenure, Hinman has achieved many accomplishments, including:

- Growing the Hinman Dental Meeting to its peak of more than 23,000 attendees and 430+ exhibiting companies and establishing Hinman as one of the nation’s leading continuing education dental meetings.
- Elevating Hinman to be consistently one of Atlanta’s Top 10 Professional Conferences, contributing an average of nearly \$20 million annually to the local economy.
- Expanding the Hinman Dental Society’s membership to more than 800 dentists, who volunteer their time to ensure the success of its Annual Meeting.
- Establishing Hinman Dental Society fellowships and scholarships over the past 20 years that have contributed more than \$10 million in support of dental education and have benefitted countless students at universities throughout the Southeast.

“For the past 24 years, Sylvia has been the lifeblood of Hinman and has played a very critical role in making Hinman the success it is today. She has been a tremendous leader who has been instrumental in growing Hinman and maintaining its position as the premiere dental meeting in the country,” said Dr. L. Maxwell Ferguson, Chair of the Hinman Board of Trustees. “We are sad to see her retire, but greatly appreciate her many contributions over the years, including the capable team she has developed. We are fortunate that she is able to stay on through May to work alongside and share her experience with Annette.”

Ratchford has more than 40 years of experience in the hospitality, meeting planning and association management industries. Prior to assuming the role of Executive Director at Hinman, Ratchford worked in sales management for nine years at The Westin Peachtree Plaza. She then worked another nine years at AmericasMart, including the pre-opening of INFORUM, where she was responsible for the marketing and sales of the exhibits and meeting space in all four buildings.

Ratchford has served on the board of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau and as President of the Southeastern Chapter of the Professional Convention Management Association. She is also a long-time member of the International Association of Exhibitions and Events. She earned her bachelor's degree in fine arts at the University of Georgia. Ratchford looks forward to moving near her hometown of Gastonia, N.C. and spending time on Lake Wylie with family and friends.

“The past 24 years have been a blessing for me both professionally and personally. My hope is that the many relationships I’ve formed with colleagues and friends, as a result of Hinman and my career in Atlanta, will be lifelong,” said Ratchford. “Annette is well respected in the Atlanta hospitality community and I feel confident that Hinman is in very capable hands going forward. I know that the Hinman leadership, members and staff will support her as well as they have me over the years.”

Incoming Executive Director

Native Atlantan **Annette Sullivan** began working full-time this month with the goal of transitioning many of Ratchford's duties by the end of year. Sullivan brings more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality and meeting planning industry. Her most recent position was with the Georgia World Congress Center where she was a member of the national convention sales team. She also has worked on the sales team for the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau in Atlanta and spent 10 years in Washington, D.C. working with associations. She worked for the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau and Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau bringing associations to each of those destinations. Prior to being on the sales side, her association experience includes management roles with the National Association of Computer Consultant Businesses and Associated Builders & Contractors.

“We are thrilled to have Annette join Hinman as our new Executive Director and lead the meeting into the future. Her experience and unique perspective will play an important role in positioning Hinman for years to come,” said Dr. J. Sedgie Newsom, President of the Hinman Dental Society. “While she certainly has big shoes to fill, we are confident that Annette has the expertise to guide and shape Hinman and successfully navigate the challenges that the pandemic has created.”

Sullivan grew up in Atlanta and she is an alumna of the Westminster Schools. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. She has been very involved in professional associations and charitable organizations in both Atlanta and Washington, D.C. She and her husband, Michael, reside in Buckhead and they have five children - two who are grown living in New York and three living with them in Atlanta.

Additional Appointment

In addition to naming a new Executive Director, Hinman has promoted Lynn Leidel to Director of Meetings and Education. She will assume additional responsibilities that will aid in the transitioning of executive directors. Leidel has been with Hinman for more than 16 years, most recently as Senior Meetings & Education Manager. She is responsible for building and executing the continuing education program for the Hinman Dental Meeting, often coordinating more than 300 courses and 80+ speakers annually. She also manages the production of the publications, special events and the training of the volunteer committees.

Prior to joining Hinman, Leidel worked at the Georgia Lottery Corporation for more than five years. She is a Certified Meeting Planner and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at Florida State University. She resides in Vinings.

2021 Hinman Dental Meeting

Planning is currently underway for The Hinman Dental Meeting, which will be held March 11-13, 2021. The educational program, speakers and events, which were slated for the 2020 Meeting, will be moved to the 2021 Meeting. More information on Hinman 2021 will be available soon on the [Hinman website](#) and its social media channels.

The Hinman Tradition

The Hinman Dental Meeting is designed with a commitment to quality and professionalism and a high regard for the value of continuing education. The Meeting is sponsored by the Hinman Dental Society, a non-profit organization, and excess revenue is invested and gifted in the form of individual scholarships to dental, hygiene and assisting students and in contributions to institutions that foster dental education. For additional information about the Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting, visit Hinman.org or contact Hinman at (404) 231-1663.



Sylvia Ratchford
Executive Director



Annette Sullivan
Incoming Executive Director



Lynn Leidel
Director of Meetings and
Education



The Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting
Nationally Approved PACE Program
Provider for FAGD/MAGD credit.
Approval does not imply acceptance by
any regulatory authority or AGD endorsement.
6/1/2017 to 5/31/2021
Provider ID# 219082

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Media contact:

Kim Donovan / The Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting
(404) 822-7087 / kim@loudclearpr.com