

# Alumni

## NEWS

### ALUMNI PROFILE:

#### Debbie Haas Oro (D'79) and Bob Oro (D'79)

By Amy Biemiller

It just wasn't enough that Penn Dental Medicine alumni Deb (D'79) and Bob Oro (D'79) were caring for the oral health of their community in Oro Valley, Ariz. They have made it their jobs to spearhead efforts to make their town the healthiest in America.

"Health is our wealth," says Deb. "With the extended life expectancy increasing into our '90s, the potential catastrophic implications of an unhealthy boomer retirement generation is more than our economy can stand."

Putting words into deeds, the Oros founded the Healthiest Town in America program three years ago after learning about the Activate Tucson program, which is part of a larger YMCA USA initiative — America on the Move — promoting healthy communities and educational emphasis on the epidemics of obesity and diabetes. They officially launched the program in January of this year, with a community event that featured 50 sponsors and over 1,300 attendees.

"We spearheaded the initiative because health and healthcare need to be recognized as one of the pillars of our community of excellence," says Bob. "But this effort really starts with the understanding that health starts with the individual. It's a personal responsibility and a responsibility to our community."

The undertaking of the Oros included bringing members of the town council, chambers of commerce, hospitals, schools and community citizens together in one committee to develop the program. While the ultimate goal of the program is overall better health, the committee knew that in order to gain

participation, they needed a starting point. They came up with three specific activities that program members needed to agree to undertake in order to be official program participants: wear a pedometer, track their daily activity and agree not to gain weight for a year. "It's a program based on small changes, one person at a time. It's not the end-all, but just the beginning," says Bob. To support participants' commitments, community officials plan to have monthly events to encourage healthy lifestyles. Participants in the program also have access to health and wellness resources via the Healthiest Town in America website.

Oro Valley's program has inspired neighboring communities to investigate how they can get their residents to 'shape up' and join the Healthiest Town initiative. "After the kick-off event, we were asked to speak at five different communities/organizations and provide information for two newsletters," says Deb.

Community activism is nothing new for the Oros, who base their practice on community service. "Our business model is based on a four-day



office work week, with Friday being our community service day every week," says Bob. Their involvement on the community level includes business initiatives, public education, community planning and community outreach. "We've been involved with many significant community service projects since moving here in 1996. It's service that is fun, and that has been good for us, our family and our community."

As active members of their community, the Oros have found that their

#### Debbie (Haas) Oro (D'79)

General practice residency – Lutheran Hospital Medical center – 1979 to 1980  
In practice, Westchester County, NY – 1981 to 1996  
Fellowship of Academy of General Dentistry – Detroit, MI – 1985  
Esthetic dentistry lecturer – 1994 to 2000  
In practice – Oro Valley, AZ – 1996 to present

#### Bob Oro (D'79)

General practice residency – Brookdale Hospital Medical Center – 1979 to 1981  
In practice, Westchester County, NY – 1981 to 1996  
Fellowship of Academy of General Dentistry – Detroit, MI – 1985  
Master of the Academy of General Dentistry – Chicago, IL – 1988  
Instructor, Brookdale Hospital Medical Center – 1984 to 1986  
National lecturer – 1994 to 2000  
In practice – Oro Valley, AZ – 1996 to present