**MY DENTAL NIGHTMARE:**

The moment I walked into the clinic I was separated from my mom. Behind closed doors I was quickly strapped to a papoose board, threatened, held down, and choked by my pediatric dentist. After what felt like hours, I returned to my mom in the waiting room with tears streaming down my face, she looked at my mouth and saw, not one or two but, eight crowns in my mouth. We had not agreed to this. My mom was not informed of another procedure prior to the visit, let alone six more. She shouted at the office manager, furious that treatment was carried out without informed consent. Without the ability to express the extent of her anger, she picked me up and stormed out of the clinic. Many years later, I would read an article about that same pediatric dentist being sued on nine accounts of assault, abuse, and malpractice. He had profited over $1.5 million a year treating children on Medicaid.

**MY FIRST HCASB EXPERIENCE:**

When I discovered that I was assigned to shadow at a dental clinic, my stomach dropped. I dreaded being anywhere near a dentist! But, I pushed myself endure the sounds and smells of my horrific past for at least one day. The moment I took a step into the clinic, I began to panic.

However, throughout the course of the day I was impressed by the skill and artistry that went into sculpting a tooth. I was amazed by the diversity of procedures you could perform and saw treatments involving crowns, veneers, bridges, dentures, and—my favorite—extractions! The dentist was extremely compassionate. He did his best to get to know the patients and their circumstances. His treatment plans were transparent and he provided different options for those who were struggling financially. I also noticed how well the clinic flowed. The team of dental assistants, hygienists, and sterilizers worked efficiently to prepare the clinic for smooth transitions. Not once did I see the dentist strap a child to a papoose board and not once did I hear a single patient scream.

I had the option of rotating into the hospital, but I was so excited about what I saw that I decided to stay for the entire week. I have never been so enthusiastic about any career in my life. It combined my interests of helping and educating people in need, being detail oriented, using your hands, working with a great team, and the application of science! Most importantly, I now understood that my horrible experience as a child is not representative of the profession at all.

It was completely unexpected, but I fell in love with dentistry and I haven’t looked back since!