“THE MOMENT I came back to Penn Dental I felt the energy again of learning and sharing with colleagues,” says Dr. Lee Durst, D’83, the recently elected President of the Alumni Society Executive Committee, and she is eager to use this new role to encourage fellow alumni to do the same. The serendipitous timing of meeting the School’s Morton Amsterdam Dean Denis Kinane at the Greater New York Dental Meeting in the fall of 2009 brought Dr. Durst back to Penn Dental Medicine and she has been actively engaged at the School ever since.

“I was in the midst of trying to sell my practice, yet felt I wasn’t ready to leave dentistry, and asked the Dean about getting involved at the School,” recalls Dr. Durst. “He suggested the possibility of joining the School’s Faculty Practice, which was adding clinicians at the time.” By February 2010, she had sold her East Falls, Philadelphia, general practice (finding the interested parties through a posting on Penn Dental Medicine’s career opportunities web page) and was part of the Penn Dental Faculty Practices. Originally working in the Practice three days a week, she is now there two days a week and works a third day as Director of Dental Services at Penn Nursing’s LIFE Center for seniors, where Penn Dental Medicine provides dental services. She supervises fourth-year dental students who rotate through LIFE, helping her provide care.

Dr. Durst was quickly recruited to join the Alumni Executive Committee soon after starting in the Faculty Practices, and while she didn’t anticipate taking on the leadership role as President this soon, she is eagerly taking up the task of energizing the Committee to help reconnect fellow alumni to the School, each other, and current students. We sat down with Dr. Durst to ask her about this new role shortly after starting her two-year term in July 2013.

Q: What are your key goals for the Alumni Executive Committee?
A: A primary goal is to simply get more alumni back and involved with each other and the current students. In the last three years that I have been on the Committee, I went to every alumni event, and thought, why aren’t there more alumni doing this? They are great fun, and it is very special to meet today’s students. I really hope I can encourage people who haven’t been involved in years to just give it a try.

Q: How do you hope to do that?
A: First, we are working closely with the Alumni Relations Office on alumni communications to help ensure that alumni are aware of the various programs and ways to get involved in the School. One of the biggest challenges is having current contact information for alumni. So I encourage alumni to go online and update their contact information through QuakerNet (www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/UPN/) or contact the Alumni Office (alumnifeedback@dental.upenn.edu or 215-898-8951) with it.

In addition, in partnership with the other officers, we are focusing on tapping into the unique skills and interests of our Executive Committee members by identifying subcommittees that will focus on specific projects related to alumni communications, events, continuing education, alumni-student connections, annual fund, reunion committees, and nominations of other alumni for the Executive Committee.

Q&A with Dr. Lee Durst, D’83
President, Alumni Society Executive Committee

One project already underway is a mentoring program to pair upper classmen with local alumni practices to learn about the business of running a dental practice.

Q: Why do you feel it is important for alumni to engage with the School?
A: We all need to continue learning, and we can learn as much from the students as the students can learn from us. Plus, it is so gratifying to meet these growing professionals, hear where they are headed, and pay it forward.

ABOVE: Dr. Lee Durst (D’83) with classmate Dr. Cornelius Sullivan (D’83) at Alumni Weekend 2013.