

Three Times the Charm

There is a lot more to a new smile than meets the eye, so it is prudent to look for a dentist who is highly skilled in clinical cosmetic dentistry.

Barbara Samuels wasn't happy with her smile.

"My teeth were discolored and I wasn't pleased with their appearance," remembers the medical office manager from Denville, NJ. "I had great dental health care in New Jersey, but when I relocated down here to Florida several years ago, I learned it wasn't easy to find someone I liked as well.

"It actually took me three tries before I found Dr. Blank."

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie. Considering each patient's expectations, Dr. Blank chooses his cosmetic dentistry procedures and methods carefully. He takes his time in evaluating both the patient's dental condition and how the new smile will fit with other facial features.

bite all the way through something like a sandwich, and it can be difficult to hold food in the mouth.

"So Barbara's case was driven by both cosmetics and function," notes Dr. Blank, whose smile makeovers include in-depth discussions; choosing the right materials; designing the length of the new teeth; ideal proportions; desired morphology, or shape, of the teeth; color; and any other aesthetic and functional concerns. He begins by explaining to his patients exactly what is going on and what treatment plans are available.

"We wanted to give Barbara a brighter smile and help her teeth look better as well as function better," observes Dr. Blank, "so for her we recommended repositioning her front teeth by reshaping seven of her upper teeth and six of her lower teeth and bringing them into



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After Dr. Blank removes any metal fillings, he cleans out the tooth completely. Then, depending on the size of the filling, he replaces the metal with either a tooth-colored bonded filling or with crown restorations. In Barbara's case, crowns were the best choice.

"Because old silver fillings contain mercury," describes Dr. Blank, "we've added a heavy metal separator to our suction machine so that the metal doesn't go into the ground and become part of our community's drinking water.

"We always try to be good neighbors."

Once the patient's old dentistry is removed, impressions are made for the laboratory, and temporaries that match the wax-up are placed.

"The temporaries give our patients an opportunity to see the appearance of their new restorations," observes Dr. Blank. "At this stage, changes can still be made, such as adding a bit of length or a little curvature or a slight reduction."

Additionally, Dr. Blank performs a T-Scan, which enables him to digitally record his patient's bite so that both his patient and he can view the bite on a computer monitor.

"From the time people begin to close their teeth until their mouths are completely closed might take only half of a second," points out Dr. Blank, "but in that time we make a movie that is hundreds of frames long. We can observe which tooth touched first, second, third, and so on.

"Our goal is to have them all meet evenly at the same time."

"My temporaries fit so well that they



PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Before photo of Barbara's open bite.

didn't even look like temporaries," says Barbara, "but we did use them to perfect the color of the final veneers. We got the perfect shade of white."

The laboratory then made Barbara's veneers to match the dental work Dr. Blank prepared.

"The entire process went just fine," says Barbara. "The entire staff is so caring about every aspect of the procedure that there was simply no pain. Everything was performed so well that I didn't have any doubts for one second."

Great results

"If teeth are crowded or in a poor alignment, we can reshape them and create spaces that are more natural and floss friendly," assures Dr. Blank, "so the gum tissue in between them benefits as well.

"Additionally, when Barbara began with me, her TM joints were clicking intermittently, which is often from a bite that is out of harmony with the muscles. By improving her bite, we've been able to reduce the clicking, so her joint is healed and is showing better stability."

"I'm thrilled," admits Barbara. "Dr. Blank is now my general dentist, and since I've had the cosmetic work done, my teeth have been in such good health that I only need to see him for checkups and cleanings." **FHCN—Kris Kline**

Stephen Blank, DDS

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"As soon as I had my first appointment with Dr. Blank and observed his professionalism, his knowledge, the office, and his staff, I knew immediately that his practice was exactly what I wanted," recalls Barbara. "My first office visit was for something minor, like a cavity or something, but once I realized how good he was, I scheduled a cosmetic consultation."

Smile makeover

Barbara scheduled a smile makeover appointment with Dr. Blank, which was the consultation where her needs and goals were addressed.

"When Barbara first came to me back in 2005, she expressed some concerns with her smile," recounts Dr. Blank. "The color of her teeth was uneven, somewhat due to the position of her teeth and also because of some old bonded fillings.

"Another problem was that her top and bottom front teeth failed to come together when her jaws were in a closed position. She had what is called an *open bite*."

With an open bite, it is impossible to

contact with each other by strategically placing all ceramic veneers."

Veneers are thin, semitranslucent shells that are permanently bonded to the front of the teeth. They can go up and over the tip of the tooth and onto the biting surface to replace any missing tooth structure. Not only do they help patients achieve a beautiful, confident smile, but they also contribute to improved dental health.

After Dr. Blank designs the size, shape, color, and position of the tooth restorations, study models and photographs of his patient's mouth are taken and sent to the laboratory for a wax-up.

A wax-up, or a wax model of how the enhanced or repaired teeth will look, is completed by the laboratory following Dr. Blank's prescription. It simulates the new teeth and is used to make any necessary changes before the lab proceeds to make the patient's new porcelain restorations.

The patient's teeth are prepared for the new restorations and any old dentistry is removed.

"One of Barbara's initial concerns was replacing her old silver fillings, which tend to make teeth look bluish black because the color of the metal shows through the tooth," says Dr. Blank. "She told me her goal was to be healthy and she wished to have all the metal in her mouth removed."



As a published humor writer, as well as a medical office manager, Barbara says her smile is especially important.

Gold Medal Winner

Dr. Blank was awarded four gold medals at the 2007 Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Annual Scientific Session competition, which was designed to reward excellence in clinical cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.



For that healthy smile

Dr. Blank and his staff look forward to meeting the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call (772) 878-7348. His office is located at 184 NW Central Park Plaza in Port St. Lucie. Call today for a complimentary cosmetic consultation to learn what Dr. Blank can do for your smile.



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a 1982 graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies. Dr. Blank has studied TMJ under Mark Piper, MD, DMD, at the Piper Education and Research Center. He has completed the course continuum at the Dawson Center for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Blank was a clinical instructor with the Hornbrook Group, teaching dentists from all parts of the country in live, hands-on courses on the various aspects of smile design, occlusion, full mouth reconstruction, and complete patient care. He is a facilitator/mentor with the Dental Boot Kamp program. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.



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