

# Brace Yourself

**You do not have to be a teenager to consider tooth straightening. In fact, you can use a method they can't ... invisibly.**

**A**fter more than seven decades, Marge Yager still had three of her four wisdom teeth. "I think that may have been the reason my teeth were crooked," reflects the retired executive secretary. "In any case, my teeth were moving out of alignment and it was affecting my bite and the way I was able, or unable, to chew. I would munch in such a way that I was chipping my teeth."

**Stephen G. Blank, DDS**

Straighter teeth improve the bite, and overall health depends on good dental health. If a person cannot chew food properly, it affects what they eat, how thoroughly they can chew, and how well they can digest.

"I've also had a problem with TMJ throughout the years so I've been wearing a bite appliance at night to help solve the situation," confides Marge.

TMJ, or Temporomandibular Joint Syndrome, is a misalignment of the two joints that connect the jaw to the skull, and is affected by the way the teeth come together (your bite).

"My dentist, Dr. Blank, had previously mentioned the possibility of me having my teeth straightened," remembers Marge, "but I wasn't ready to do it."

Stephen G. Blank, DDS, practices cosmetic and functional dentistry in Port St. Lucie.

"However, the situation did not correct itself," concedes Marge, "and it got to the point where I realized I had to do something about it."

For Marge, Dr. Blank recommended nearly invisible removable aligners.

## Invisalign

Invisalign is an effective treatment option for patients with crooked or spaced teeth. It is an almost invisible method to straighten teeth without metal wires, traditional braces, or brackets, and the aligners are removable for eating, and dental hygiene.

"Once we determine that a patient is a good candidate for Invisalign, the case begins by taking x-rays and impressions of our patients' teeth," explains Dr. Blank. "I submit the data, along with a written prescription describing the technical details and types of movements I want to accomplish, to Align Technology, the developer of Invisalign. Using 3-D computer technology, they digitize this information, formulating a treatment plan showing the projected movements step-by-step. We work back and forth with the lab technician, looking at the requirements and evaluating the computer analysis."

As soon as the dentist approves the plan, technicians determine the number of aligners the patient will require to straighten his or her teeth. A series of precisely customized clear plastic aligners are fabricated to achieve that goal.



FHCN PHOTO BY BRIAN GLENN

The aligners are then sent back to the dentist. The patient is then given their first set of aligners, which are worn for two weeks. Each aligner moves teeth incrementally, millimeter by millimeter, through a combination of movements, just like traditional metal braces do.

"Because Marge's lower teeth had more crowding than her upper teeth, she required eighteen lower and only fifteen upper aligners," observes Dr. Blank. "She, as with all of our Invisalign patients, comes in every four to six weeks so we can monitor her progress, make adjustments, and give her the next set of aligners."

The aligners are very comfortable to wear. When patients first put them on they feel like there is something tight over all of their teeth but within a couple of hours that dissipates. Patients can often tell which teeth are being moved.

"The first few weeks I had to get used to putting on the aligners and taking them off correctly," recalls Marge, "but it wasn't any problem. In fact, it has been rather interesting and Dr. Blank was very thorough in his explanations. Anything I didn't understand, he went through in detail.

His total approach was professional, genuine, and his sense of humor didn't hurt, either.

Dr. Blank called Marge his *teenage senior*.

"At first I was hesitant for anyone to know I was wearing *braces*," admits Marge, "because people tend to think teeth straightening is for young people. I note that I'm no longer considered among the younger set.

"Well, young in mind, maybe," she adds with a laugh.

"Actually, Invisalign is only for patients whose teeth are fully erupted and their growth is finished," clarifies Dr. Blank, "so typically they are not for young teenagers who are still busy growing their second molars."

Invisalign provides many advantages to qualified patients, points out Dr. Blank: "They can remove them to eat their meals so there are no food restrictions, like there are with traditional braces. Patients can floss their teeth and brush them regularly because there is nothing in the way. The aligners are clear, so they are almost invisible. If one of them does pick up a little stain it does not matter because after two weeks they are discarded.

"For patients whose teeth are very crooked but who want veneers, Invisalign can be used initially to give the patient better alignment so that when we adhere the veneers, the cosmetic outcome will be much better."

BEFORE PHOTO BY DR. BLANK



**Marge, above, is in the refinement stage of her Invisalign treatment and says she can see it working.**

## Excellent results

Marge is in the refinement stage of her Invisalign treatment.

"I can see that it is working," assures Marge. "My teeth are straight and my TMJ doesn't bother me now because I have the correct alignment."

"One of our treatment goals was to center Marge's jaw," says Dr. Blank. "We moved the teeth into harmony with her joints so her symptoms will stay quiet or disappear completely."

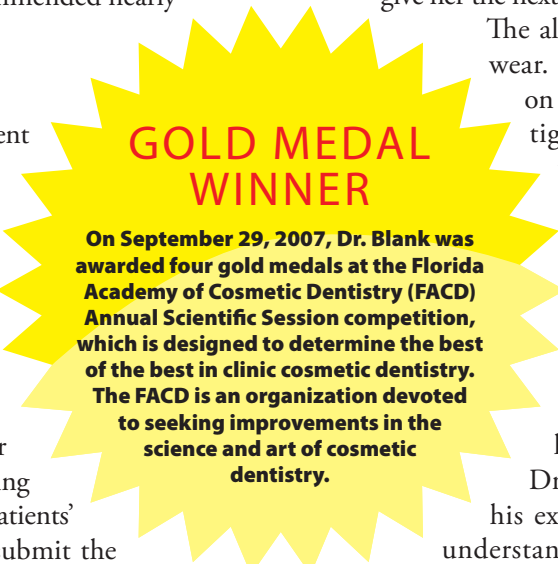
"My husband and I have been seeing Dr. Blank for seventeen years," says Marge, "and he has done some extensive dental work on both of us. But throughout it all we have been extremely pleased with both him and his staff.

"In the past I was very uncomfortable going to the dentist, but not anymore. From my first contact with Dr. Blank's practice it has been a positive experience. His dedication comes through in so many ways. I'm impressed with the continuing education he and his staff engage in to keep up with all the leading edge of technology.

"They are thorough, light-hearted, and friendly while extremely knowledgeable and helpful, every one of them." **FHCN**—Kris Kline

## 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.*



### GOLD MEDAL WINNER

**On September 29, 2007, Dr. Blank was awarded four gold medals at the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Annual Scientific Session competition, which is designed to determine the best of the best in clinic cosmetic dentistry. The FACD is an organization devoted to seeking improvements in the science and art of cosmetic dentistry.**



### Invisalign® The Alternative To Traditional Braces

- **Nearly undetectable**
- **Continue to enjoy your favorite foods**
- **Brush and floss normally**
- **Less abrasion in the mouth**
- **Comfortable and effective**



Stephen G. Blank, DDS, is a graduate of Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. He has since completed intensive continuing education studies, and he and his dental team have completed the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation program. Dr. Blank is 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 and a supporter of the Smiles for Life Foundation. Dr. Blank enjoys teaching dental teams around the country.

Dr. Blank invites you to visit his website at **www.PSLDENTIST.com.**