

# Form Follows Function

## When people's smiles aren't all they want them to be, there could be more going on than mere cosmetic concerns.



Michael's new smile is so compelling that no one even noticed he'd shaved off his mustache!

### 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.

FHCN PHOTO BY NERISSA JOHNSON



BEFORE



AFTER

BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Michael Smith was not happy with his lower front teeth.

"I went to the same dentist in Staten Island, New York, for about two decades," recounts Michael. "I didn't let anyone else touch my teeth, so even after my wife Beverly and I moved down to Florida, he continued as my dentist.

"During my last appointment with him I admitted that I was very dissatisfied with my bottom jaw. My teeth were wearing out and had started to turn yellow."

Michael says he thought they looked terrible.

"My dentist said the process had been going on for twenty years, that they were healthy teeth, and I shouldn't worry about them," remembers Michael, "but to me they looked atrocious.

Although his dentist offered to treat him, Michael decided that it was time he found a new dentist closer to home.

"I began asking for recommendations," recalls Michael. "Then Beverly heard about Dr. Blank."

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

"She learned that he is a supporter of the Smiles for Life Foundation and participates in their annual children's charities teeth whitening campaign. She said, *That's the kind of compassionate person we want as our dentist.*" [For additional information about Smiles for Life, visit [www.smilesforlife.org](http://www.smilesforlife.org). This year, Dr. Blank and his team raised \$1,750 for Smiles for Life.]

### The diagnosis

The Smiths scheduled appointments with Dr. Blank for new patient exams and X-rays.

"Michael and Beverly have been patients of ours since August of 2005," recalls Dr. Blank. "During Michael's first appointment he expressed concerns about maintaining strong teeth and a healthy mouth, and he wanted to discuss a recurrent stain on his lower front teeth. He confided that, although he consistently brushed them, he couldn't keep them looking clean."

During Michael's in-depth examination, Dr. Blank discovered that Michael's front teeth had worn down significantly on the biting edge and the enamel was worn away.

"As significant wear occurs, teeth rise up from the gum," educates Dr. Blank. "As a tooth super-erupts, the patient's root surface is exposed above the gum line. This creates a worn and aged appearance.

"Additionally, as enamel is worn off, the dentin layer is revealed." Dentin is the yellow-brown substance that lies under the

enamel and protects the innermost part of the tooth. "This is like an M&M where the candy coating is gone, exposing the softer chocolate center. Once the dentin is exposed, the wear continues faster and faster.

"Michael's upper teeth were experiencing the same dynamic," notes Dr. Blank. "Although normal, healthy front teeth are typically between ten-and-a-half and eleven-and-a-half millimeters tall, Michael's upper two front teeth were only seven-and-a-half millimeters tall. And while a lower tooth is typically between nine and ten millimeters tall, his lower teeth measured approximately seven-and-a-half millimeters tall with some brown root showing.

"This, together with a habit of grinding his teeth and his unstable bite, meant that Michael's anterior teeth were self-destructive and were destined to wear down to an even greater extent."

Michael's back teeth still had sharp edges and were in acceptable condition.

"Dr. Blank turned out to be likable, easy to talk with, and down to earth," describes Michael. "He explained that the degeneration of my teeth was due to a bad bite. He cautioned me that, while there was no emergency, over time it would only get worse.

"He recommended I have them treated to protect them from rapid wear and to fix the unsightly color of my exposed roots."

### The treatment

After some thoughtful consideration, Michael elected to have his six upper and lower anterior teeth treated.

Mindful of his patients' expectations, Dr. Blank chooses his cosmetic dentistry procedures and methods carefully. For Michael, he recommended gaining tooth length by raising his upper gum line and lowering his lower gum line with laser crown lengthening, a comfortable pro-

cedure that requires no conventional surgery. Next, he would apply all-porcelain crowns, restoring function by replacing the tips on Michael's cuspids (upper eye teeth), which would help guide his mouth while chewing, and on the middle four teeth for function and a great smile.

During Michael's diagnostic visit, Dr. Blank designed the size, shape, color and position of the tooth restorations and completed the laser gum treatment. Study models and photographs of Michael's mouth were taken that he 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 veneers or crowns.

"On our patient's second visit, the teeth are prepared for the new restorations, and any old, obstructing dentistry is removed," says Dr. Blank. "Impressions are made for the laboratory, and temporaries that match the wax-up are created.

"The temporaries give our patients the opportunity to see how their new smile will look. At this stage changes can be made, such as adding a bit of length or a little curvature or a slight reduction. We give the laboratory instructions on coloring, translucency, and brightness." Digital images of the temporaries are sent to laboratory technician for better results.

Following his second visit, Michael left Dr. Blank's office with resin temporaries.

"They looked just like his new teeth were going to look," adds Dr. Blank. In just a few short weeks, Michael returned for his new smile to be completed.

The final step for his restorations was to bond the porcelain crowns to Michael's teeth.

"I am so proud of my teeth that I wanted to show them off," admits Michael, "so I shaved off the mustache I'd had for forty-five years. So far, everyone has commented on how great my teeth look, and not one of them, not even my own children, has even noticed that my mustache is gone!

"Dr. Blank did an amazing job, and he's not only a great dentist but he's also a fine person.

"And his staff impressed me, as well. They really are wonderful people. It's like a family."

Dr. Blank practices in a small office setting and takes great pride in treating only one patient at a time. "All of our patients are treated as if they are family," he says. **FHCN**—Kris Kline

### Stephen G. Blank, DDS



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 has taught continuing education courses for dentists, dental assistants, and hygienists in conjunction with Indian River Community College's Dental Science department, and 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.

"I had never been self-conscious about them before, but now that we had moved and I was meeting new people, they bothered me."

Dr. Blank invites you to visit his website at [www.PSLDENTIST.com](http://www.PSLDENTIST.com).