

A Better Bite

Revolutionary technology invisibly and painlessly realigns teeth to create a straighter, healthier smile.

At age 77, Carole DeRizzo finally decided to do something about her smile. “I’ve always had crooked teeth, especially the lower teeth,” she confides, “and I just decided after all these years that I was worth it.”

need to make room for crowded bottom teeth, we may need to move the upper teeth out just a bit.” Compared to other types of orthodonture, Invisalign doesn’t require metal or porcelain brackets or wires. The aligners are removable, so patients can

Stephen Blank, DDS

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A nurse who retired from working at an allergist’s office at the end of October, Carole says she wasn’t really self-conscious about the way she looked. “I think you learn to adapt,” she admits. “You learn how to smile so that maybe other people really don’t notice.”

She was concerned, however, that her overall health was being affected by her poor bite. “One of the teeth was causing me to have a little irritated area in my gum, and I knew that wasn’t a good thing,” she relates. “I had four children. Three of them were in orthodonture, and I have a grandson in orthodonture. And I thought, *It’s my turn.*”

Having been a patient of Stephen G. Blank, DDS, since he opened his practice in Port St. Lucie nearly 30 years ago, Carole knew right where to go.

Invisalign® option

To repair her bite and improve her smile, Carole opted for Invisalign, a system that works to straighten teeth over a period of months using a series of virtually invisible, removable, plastic aligners.

Invisalign works in stages, and patients get a new set of customized aligners about every two weeks. Each set gradually moves the teeth to the specifications prescribed by the dentist, and treatment generally takes between 12 and 18 months.

“It’s a little tight. You feel it,” reports Carole. “But it’s a good feeling because you know you’re making a correction. That’s what I like about it.”

Even if only one area of the mouth is problematic, Invisalign patients nearly always need correction on both the top and bottom arch, Dr. Blank notes.

“When we do Invisalign, almost all of the time we treat the top and bottom because they fit together like the gears on an old watch,” he explains. “If we

continue to eat their favorite foods and practice proper oral hygiene.

And, as the name implies, the aligners are virtually invisible – even after more than a year in treatment, Carole’s husband of 56 years hasn’t noticed them.

“My husband, still to this day, does not know I’ve got them,” she confides. “I take them out for meals, and then I go to the bathroom and brush my teeth and put them back in. He’s never noticed.”

Form and function

Dr. Blank stresses that though many cosmetic dental procedures help patients’ smiles look better, in many cases, the procedures are also instrumental in improving function as well, thereby preventing further dental damage.

Left untreated, misaligned teeth can lead to long-term dental deterioration. “When teeth are rotated during regular function, they bump into each other a little differently than they would if they were straight,” explains Dr. Blank. “You don’t know it as a patient because it’s your bite. It’s what you’ve always had, so you’re used to it. It’s like having a shoe that doesn’t fit, and then one day you finally get a new one, and you realize, *Oh, that feels better!*”

“So when we’re able to make the teeth fit together, then functionally they don’t cause each other to wear out. They work in harmony instead of in conflict with one another.”

“I’m a nurse,” relates Carole. “I know how important health is, and especially dental health. I appreciate the cosmetic value [of straighter teeth], but physically, to maintain your health, you’ve got to take care of every part of your body.”

Treatment with Invisalign is appropriate for patients of all ages, from teenagers to octogenarians, adds Dr. Blank. “There’s no restriction on doing Invisalign,” he says. “The only caveat is that the patient has a healthy dental foundation that supports tooth movement.”

Commitment to care

Before any treatment plan can be put in place, all of Dr. Blank’s patients undergo in-depth testing and evaluations. The



Carole is thrilled with her new, straight smile.

PHOTO BY MARC EDWARDS

1.5-hour exam includes a complete oral examination, including TMJ, bite and soft tissue evaluations; computerized periodontal measurements; digital x-rays; an intra-oral video tour that allows the patient to see what the dentist sees; oral hygiene fitness evaluation and more.

“It’s not your typical five-minute dental exam,” assures the dentist. “The foundation is to build a good dental relationship that will allow you to achieve the best oral health possible and, with proper care, maintain that level of health for a lifetime.”

A few months ago, Dr. Blank brought a brand-new technology to his patients that changes the way dental impressions are made. Instead of using messy rubber that must sit in the mouth for several minutes to harden, he now uses the 3M™ True Definition Scanner – a handheld tool that digitally records teeth in three dimensions. The data is then sent to a lab or to Invisalign. “The lab starts working on the case before the patient even leaves my office,” assures Dr. Blank. “We’ve been doing impressions for thirty years now, and this is the new impression. They’ve been working wonderfully.”

This willingness to embrace the latest leading-edge technology is indicative of Dr. Blank’s commitment to

care and investment in his patients.

“He’s a very caring fellow,” observes Carole. “He gets to know his patients fully. He really wants the best for them and is concerned every step of the way. He takes photographs and shows you on the computer how much progress you’ve made. He takes a personal interest. You’re not just a run of the mill, one of those get-them-in-get-them-out [patients]. I always brag about him.”

Carole, who is almost finished with her Invisalign treatment, is thrilled with the way her teeth look now. “They definitely look better,” she says. “Definitely.”

FHCN—Melanie Casey



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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Scan the QR code for Dr. Blank’s contact information.

SNAP Instant Dental Imaging

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. Ask how you can see your smile enhanced with SNAP Instant Dental Imaging. You will be able to see your new smile before you make any decisions.



Gold Medal Winner

Dr. Blank was awarded gold medals by the Florida Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (FACD) Scientific Session competition, which is 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.

Visit the office website at www.PSLDentist.com or call (772) 878-7348.