

Straighten Your Smile

Revolutionary technology invisibly and painlessly realigns teeth.

Kids, as they say, say the darnedest things. They are also lacking the filter that most of us develop as we age, and as such they can be brutally – sometimes painfully – honest.

Debra Mulrooney, MD, has been a pediatrician for 25 years. When she would examine some of her littlest patients, she would sometimes have to open her mouth wide to demonstrate what she wanted them to do. They often would comment on the state of her mouth.

“They would say, *Oh, your teeth are ugly!* Or *Oh, you didn’t brush your teeth,*” says the doctor, who is originally from Michigan and now practices in Port St. Lucie. “They notice every little detail.”

Though her four siblings wore braces as children, Dr. Mulrooney never did. Consequently, “I had terrible crowding in my mouth,” she confides. She also had one tooth that jutted up above the rest, which her son dubbed *the witch’s tooth*. “If you looked at it from a certain angle, I had this great big, long tooth that looked really dumb,” she admits.

“I was a little self-conscious about it, but it wasn’t a big deal,” she adds. “When I finally had the financial resources to do braces, I thought I’d look kind of ridiculous wearing braces as an older person.”

When Dr. Mulrooney moved from Miami to Port St. Lucie three years ago, she needed to find a new general dentist. She came across Stephen G. Blank, DDS, whose office is near her home, and was impressed when she learned that he participates in a program called *Smiles for Life*, an annual fundraiser that benefits children’s charities.

“I went into the office, and it was just an awesome office,” she relates. “The staff, they’re just so friendly, and it’s so welcoming. It’s so clean. The atmosphere is just very welcoming.”

Invisalign option

On one of her first visits a few years ago, “we started to talk about my oral hygiene and the crowding in my mouth, and Dr. Blank asked me if it was something that had bothered me,” Dr. Mulrooney remembers. “I said, *Well, yeah, it does. It kind of sort of does.* Then he mentioned Invisalign®.”

Dr. Debra Mulrooney can smile with confidence again, thanks to Invisalign treatment.



FHCN PHOTO BY MARC EDWARDS

Stephen Blank, DDS

www.PSLdentist.com



Invisalign straightens teeth over a period of months using a series of virtually invisible, removable plastic aligners.

“I had never really even contemplated that,” Dr. Mulrooney acknowledges. “I don’t think I even realized that there was that technology. I had friends who had had invisible braces early on, and they were very obvious, and I thought, *This is not anything I would want to get into.* But the technology has advanced so much that it was like, *Wow! This sounds great!*”

Invisalign works in stages, and patients wear a new set of customized aligners for about two weeks. Each set gradually moves the teeth to the specifications prescribed by the dentist. For Dr. Mulrooney, the process took about a year and a half to complete.

Unlike some metal braces that can cause the mouth and jaw to ache after an adjustment, Dr. Mulrooney says Invisalign wasn’t painful at all. “You feel a little bit of pressure, but the increments are so gradual it was never something that bothered me,” she describes. “I never had to take any pain medicine or anything.”

also instrumental in improving function, thereby preventing further dental damage.

Dr. Mulrooney decided to use Invisalign not only to make her teeth look better, but also because she wanted them to last. “I had a lot of teeth break over the years, and I felt strongly that I wanted to retain my own teeth,” she says. “I did Invisalign to take care of the cosmetic thing that had always kind of bugged me, but also to preserve my own teeth so that they wouldn’t be rattling around and wearing poorly.”

Left untreated, misaligned teeth can lead to long-term dental damage. “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.”

Treatment with Invisalign is appropriate for patients of all ages, from teenagers to octogenarians, notes Dr. Blank. The only caveat is that the patient has a healthy dental foundation.

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 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 doctor 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.”

That commitment to care is indicative of Dr. Blank and his staff. “He’s just the nicest person, very warm and friendly,” describes Dr. Mulrooney. “He loves to show his craft. He’s informing you every step of the way.”

Moreover, “the nurses and office staff, they’re friendly and welcoming. [The office is] very clean and homey looking.”

After a lifetime of feeling self-conscious about her teeth and laughing off comments from her young patients, Dr. Mulrooney is glad she decided to try Invisalign. “They look very normal now!” she raves. “I’m thrilled. Absolutely thrilled.” **FHCN**—Melanie Casey



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. BLANK

Form and function

Dr. Blank stresses that though many cosmetic dental procedures help patients’ smiles look better, in many cases, like Dr. Mulrooney’s, the procedures are



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.

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.



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.



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