

Straighten Up and Smile

It's never too late to have the smile you always wanted.

Ruby "Kaye" Miller was never quite content with her smile. While she's been faithful over the years in maintaining preventative care appointments, her misaligned teeth bothered her and caused her to shy away from others.

"My bottom teeth began to push out of place over time," Kaye explains. "That became a problem with chewing. I had a gap between the two top front teeth and I hated it. I wanted that closed up."

A retired teacher from Miami-Dade County, Kaye stays busy filling in as a substitute at the local community college. At 81, Kaye says, she decided it wasn't too late to straighten her smile.

"I'm always talking to students and other teachers, and I was tired of feeling uncomfortable about how my teeth



Kaye is thrilled with her smile.

Stephen Blank, DDS

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looked to others," she recalls. "I knew they were in good shape overall, but I wanted them to be straight. I wasn't looking for a Hollywood smile; I just wanted to feel better about my smile."

Kaye knew her dentist of 20 years, Stephen G. Blank, DDS, in Port St. Lucie could help.

"I've been his patient for a long time, and I trust him with my teeth," Kaye relays. "I knew I didn't want the traditional metal braces, so there had to be another option available."

Before any treatment plan is 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 dentist sees; oral hygiene fitness evaluation and more.

"It's not your typical five-minute

dental exam," assures Dr. Blank. "The purpose is to build a good dental relationship for years to come that will allow patients to achieve the best oral health possible and, with proper care, maintain that level of health for a lifetime."

Dr. Blank's willingness to embrace the latest leading-edge technology is further indicative of his commitment to care and investment in each patient.

"We're always learning and implementing the latest technologies and procedures to ensure our patients receive the best possible oral health," he assures.

Finding the Solution

After a thorough evaluation and consultation with Dr. Blank, Kaye opted for Invisalign®, a system that works to straighten teeth over a period of months using a series of virtually invisible, removable plastic aligners.

"In Kaye's case, we used Invisalign Express, which doesn't take as long as the regular Invisalign," Dr. Blank explains. "Kaye's case was less complicated, so it involved just twenty weeks of aligners. In comparison, the traditional Invisalign treatment plan can take between twelve and eighteen months."

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.

"When we prescribe Invisalign, we treat the top and bottom because they fit together like the gears on a watch," he explains. "If we need to make room for crowded bottom teeth, we need to move the upper teeth just a bit as well."

"With Kaye, she had the gap between her two upper front teeth that she wanted to eliminate. We were able to do that."

Compared to other types of orthodontics, Invisalign doesn't require metal

or porcelain brackets, or wires, which can irritate lips and gums. The aligners are removable, so patients can continue to eat their favorite foods and practice proper oral hygiene and are virtually invisible.

"Patients love Invisalign because they can take the aligners out when they eat, and when they brush and floss. It's much easier to perform those everyday tasks than with traditional braces," Dr. Blank says.

Working in Harmony

Dr. Blank stresses that though many cosmetic dental procedures help patients' smiles look better, Invisalign is also instrumental in improving function and preventing further dental damage.

Left untreated, misaligned teeth can lead to long-term dental damage. "When teeth are rotated, they bump into each other differently than they would if they were properly aligned," explains Dr. Blank. "People don't notice it because it's their bite. It's what they have always had, and they are used to it."

"When we're able to make the teeth fit together properly, 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, emphasizes Dr. Blank. "There's no age restriction on doing Invisalign," he says. "The only caveat is that the patient has healthy bone structure and a good overall dental foundation that supports tooth movement. In this particular

case, Kaye was a perfect candidate."

Kaye says she is thrilled with the care she has received at Dr. Blank's office in the two decades since she first started going to his practice. She says perfecting her smile was on her bucket list, and she's glad she was able to achieve it with Dr. Blank's help.

"Dr. Blank and his staff are caring and compassionate, and I really love them," she says. "They make you feel good about going to the dentist."

"I am really happy with my smile now," she adds. "I have more confidence, I can chew much easier and it looks great!"

FHCN article by Judy Wade. Photo by Nerissa Johnson.

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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.



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Private Care Dental Practice

Dr. Blank and his team are dedicated to improving oral health by educating each patient to their specific needs. He sees one patient at a time in a private care setting. Dr. Blank cares for patients the way they would want to be cared for. He 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. The office is located at 184 NW Central Park Plaza in Port St. Lucie. Find them on the web at www.PSLDentist.com.



For more information, please visit the office website at www.PSLDentist.com, find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PSLDentist or call (772) 878-7348.