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Thursday, December 29, 2005

HINSDALE EDITION • A Pioneer Press Newspaper

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VITAL SIGNS

Cosmetic dentist gives patients something to smile about

Name: Dr. Jeffrey Weller

Birth date: Dec. 12, 1959

He is: a licensed general dentist with an emphasis on cosmetic and restorative dentistry. He has practiced dentistry for 20 years and opened Weller Aesthetic and Restorative Dental Care on Chicago's Gold Coast in 1997.

Vital Statistics: He and wife Tina have lived in Hinsdale for two years. They have an 18-month-old son, Nicolas.

Where did you study your area of expertise? Weller graduated from the University of Illinois Dental School in 1986. He studied at the Rosenthal Institute for Aesthetic Dentistry at New York University, becoming one of the first 10 doctors to complete Dr. Larry Rosenthal's master level achievement course.

What inspired you to go into dentistry? "I had an uncle who was a dentist in Iowa. Visiting him and seeing the things he did really interested me. I was never afraid of it. A lot of it was the personality of my uncle. He was a very caring person."

Why did you choose to concentrate on cosmetic and restorative dentistry? "I enjoy working with my hands. I enjoy working with people. Cosmetic dentistry gives me an opportunity to be creative. I enjoy creating beautiful smiles. It's a blast. A filling doesn't impress them. It doesn't make them happy."

Is cosmetic dentistry all you do? "The majority of my practice is full-mouth restoration and cosmetic work, but we do everything. I am a licensed general dentist, so people come in who weren't happy with the work their previous dentist did, or they have extensive dentistry that needs to be done. This is a particularly busy time of year, because everyone wants to be done before the holiday."

Has your uncle's caring manner influenced you as a dentist? "Yes.



For the past five years, Dr. Jeffrey Weller and his wife Tina have hosted a holiday party for friends and Weller's. The guests are asked to bring a toy for Toys for Tots. Weller was recently

We hold our patients' hands. We take very good care of them."

Who are your patients? "We see mainly adults. A lot of my patients are between 20 and 60. I see everyone from waiters and waitresses to business owners. They're looking for health, function and beauty."

What are some of the most common procedures you perform? "We do porcelain veneers, all-porcelain crowns and dental implants. We do Invisalign orthodontics. That's the only orthodontics I do. It's used to compliment the cosmetic dentistry."

What's changed since you started almost 20 years ago? "I did my first set of veneers about 19 years ago. It's become more precisioned. We can more predict our results, and

named one of the Top 3 cosmetic dentists in the country by The New York Times Magazine. He was partly inspired to enter the field by an uncle who was a dentist.

things last longer now. We can save more natural tooth structure. Some of the newer things we're doing now are the same procedures, they're just more effective. We are doing more laser recontouring of the soft tissue. In other words, the gums are an outline for the smile. With lasers, we can reshape the gums to make them look more natural or more symmetrical."

How long can a patient expect veneers or crowns to last? "Average life is 15 to 20 years, and they can last longer."

What's the best thing about your job? "Seeing someone smile after I've completed their case. People come in and cry and thank me for doing the work that I do. It's fun to

be appreciated like that."

What's the worst part? "The toughest part is when someone needs some extensive dentistry, and they can't afford it. It's very frustrating sometimes, because the type of dentistry we do can be very expensive. Cosmetic dentistry is not covered by insurance."

What attributes are essential to doing your job? "You have to be very caring, you have to be very thorough, you have to be willing to keep up on current trends in dentistry."

How do you accomplish that? "I take about 125 hours of continuing education courses every year. I take a lot of hours. I want to keep up on what's current. There isn't a certification to do cosmetic dentistry. You don't have to have special training. Only about 5 percent of dentists across the country have done special training."

What's the next big thing in cosmetic dentistry? "The next big trend is functional dentistry, rebuilding somebody's bite so that their dentistry lasts longer. Overall, that's going to contribute to overall health of their mouth. The greatest thing that ever happened to cosmetic dentistry is 'Extreme Makeover.' It made people aware of what we can do."

You recently made a large donation to Toys for Tots. Have you done this before? "About five years ago we started having Christmas parties for all of our patients. We pick a local club or restaurant and we sponsor a Christmas party. I just ask that they bring a toy for Toys for Tots. We collected at least a few hundred toys. It's great because I get to build a relationship with my patients and do something good for somebody."

What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work? "Traveling, I'm a huge eater. I love to go out to dinner."