

Driven To Be The Best

Local Dentist, Beauty Queen Strives To Give Patients Beautiful Smiles

Tom and Carol Zdanky have their hands full with two autistic children and a third, gifted child in grade school. So the last thing this Naperville couple wanted to do was drive all the way to Kenosha twice a year for family dentistry.

But that's what they did for six years because they couldn't find a dentist in their area that either could, or would, handle their special-needs children. That is, until they met Dr. Chiann Gibson, a Naperville-based dentist living in Sugar Grove.

"Dr. Gibson was at ease and friendly with our children," said Tom Zdanky. "I think a lot of dentists are uncomfortable working with special-needs kids, but Dr. Gibson was willing to give it a shot where a lot of dentists aren't."

No, Gibson doesn't focus on special-needs dentistry. She actually prefers cosmetic dentistry. But she's first and foremost a family dentist with a passion for providing affordable, high-quality dental work to her community.

"When it comes to dentistry, I'm a perfectionist," said Gibson. "If the eyes are the window of the soul, then a smile is a reflection of one's life - and it can be beautiful."

Gibson has recently ventured out on her own (www.drchiann.com) with two Naperville locations, Naperville Dental Studio/Perfect Smile Makeovers, in the promenade building in the heart of downtown; and Premier Dental, a newly-opened facility she shares with Dr. Kaz Zymantas on West Ogden Avenue. The practice has contracted with a Yorkville dentist to begin seeing patients in June.

The two Naperville offices are as varied as Gibson's dental patients. Naperville Dental Studio is a high-gloss, high-profile location complete with autographed endorsements ranging from professional football athletes to Donald Trump's letter stating that Dr. Gibson had "the ability to create the perfect smile."

Premier Dental's office is a modern-Mission-style comfortable space right out of HGTV. Yes, it even has a fireplace.

"We're not just a high-end, razzle-dazzle dentistry practice in downtown Naperville," said Gibson. "We're also a family practice. And our offices reflect that."

Still, there's lots of razzle-dazzle surrounding Gibson, a 2005 Mrs. United States pageant winner and former University of Washington cheerleader. This beautiful woman clearly has her act together. Gibson was recently asked to serve on the national board of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, and will be flying to Hawaii this month for the national convention. With more than 7,000 members in 70 nations, the AACD is the world's largest organization dedicated to cosmetic dental professionals.

"It's an honor and a privilege to be asked to serve on the board," said Gibson. "They are the top of the top."

And so is she. A graduate of Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in Boston, Gibson was a Merit Scholar who received "excellence awards" in both operative dentistry and prosthodontics. She also taught in the restorative dentistry department at Tufts. And to this day, she is committed to continuing her education, particularly in cosmetic dentistry.

"I've had people say they never smiled," Gibson said. "And when they first get (their smile) fixed and they walk into a room and just beam. It changes how people feel about themselves. And that's what motivates me."

A cosmetic dentist is just the kind of physician Paul Prewitt needed. Prewitt, a documentary filmmaker based in Florida, had damaged his teeth through extreme sports and night-time grinding. It got so bad, Prewitt rarely showed his teeth when he smiled. So Prewitt, who heard about Gibson from a friend, flew all the way to Chicago twice to have his smile restored by Gibson. And he said he'd fly back again should the need arise - she's that good. He also is adamant it's worth the time and money to have the work done.

"When you actually see for the first time your new teeth, it's astounding the difference," said Prewitt.

"And the boost in confidence is the best thing, to know that you can smile and look good is just great."

Though Prewitt was an extreme case, Gibson said cosmetic dentistry doesn't always entail a lot of work or cost. "Sometimes it's only one tooth that needs repair or closing a space between teeth," she said.

Whatever the cosmetic work that needs to be done, Gibson stresses the importance of a strong foundation in general dentistry before a smile is made over. "To be a good cosmetic dentist, you must first be a good general dentist," she said.

"A lot of it is being properly educated," said Gibson.

"The more knowledge you have as a dentist, the better off you are."

Unfortunately, Gibson sometimes sees patients who have paid a lot of money to have cosmetic dental work done, only to have to have it undone and then redone by a more skilled professional.

"Cosmetic dentistry is as much an art as it is a dental procedure" says Gibson.

Gibson's husband Jim said it's his wife's work

ethic and commitment to continuing education that makes a difference. "After putting the baby to bed, Chiann is up at night, studying case notes, reading up on technique till 1:30 in the morning," he said. "She is driven to be the best for her patients."