

Mike Bicknell, DDS

His social, scientific, and artistic life

It's a rather simple formula for Dr. Mike Bicknell of Advanced Orthodontic Specialists in Elmhurst, Illinois — work hard, treat people with kindness and honesty, and you'll build and maintain a successful orthodontic practice. Serving a tight-knit suburb of Chicago, Dr. Bicknell runs an esteemed practice founded on bringing the highest quality of care and service to his patients. In this issue, we're getting to know Dr. Bicknell — from what makes his practice stand out to what profession he would pursue if he wasn't an orthodontist.

What can you tell us about your background, and why you decided to become an orthodontist?

I grew up in a small suburb of Chicago where my mom was a nurse and my dad was an accountant. My parents stressed the value of education to my siblings and me and, subsequently, the importance of hard work. I went to an all-boys Catholic high school, and for our senior year project, we were tasked with giving a presentation on what profession we'd like to pursue. I had a great relationship with my dentist growing up, so I did a little research and gave my presentation on becoming an oral surgeon. I guess you could say this is where my interest in the profession was born.

I then went on to study biochemistry at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I continued my education at the university, pursuing dentistry, and received my Doctorate of Dental Surgery. At this point, I was still interested in dentistry but decided not to pursue oral surgery. I knew my future was in orthodontics. I love how the world of orthodontics is built upon personal patient relationships. This meshed well with my personality. Also, I worked a variety of different service jobs throughout my undergraduate studies and residency, where I



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quickly learned that communication and the customer experience are critical to being successful in this occupation.

Today in my practice, I have exceptional relationships not only with patients, but also with their families. I enjoy hearing about and celebrating their personal and professional achievements.

How long have you been practicing, and what appliances do you use?

I have been practicing orthodontics for more than 10 years, and this year my practice actually celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

When I opened my practice, I was in tune with the fact that my practice was essentially a start-up business. As I evaluated what products and technologies would best fit into my practice, I knew self-ligating brackets would be huge. It was the way to go. I talked to a few manufacturers and decided to go with the Damon® System by Ormco™. To this day, that's the self-ligating bracket system I use in my practice. I'm impressed not only with the results it delivers, but also with the focus and attention Ormco places on bringing innovative, forward-thinking products to the table.

My practice is approximately 60% adolescents and 40% adults. The adult patients love Damon™ Clear; it offers them an esthetic option that doesn't compromise patient comfort, treatment time, or final results.

Who has inspired you?

First and foremost, my parents have been incredible influences in my life. My core — what I believe, and how I treat people — was developed based on how they raised me. My inspiration also comes from my junior high school science teacher who also happened to be my wrestling coach. He had a lot of character and passion for what he did, and carried himself with confidence and wasn't afraid to be his own person.

Professionally, to this day, I look up to Dr. Kevin Kopp, a prosthodontist in my area, who centers his whole practice on patients, and I love that. He has a great practice model that is very admirable. As far as orthodontists, there are countless professionals who have inspired me. To name a few, Dr. David Sarver is extremely insightful, Dr. Dwight Damon operates with unmatched passion, and Dr. Stuart Frost creates exceptional smiles with signature smile arcs.

What is the most satisfying aspect of your practice, and what makes it unique?

The most satisfying thing about my practice and profession is that it is a reflection of every aspect of my personality, which makes my job so enjoyable — it's social, scientific, and artistic. It's also comforting and satisfying knowing that we are taking care of people and helping make their lives better.

At my practice, we place a significant emphasis on engaging with the surrounding community and, more importantly, giving back to it. We've hosted a holiday season toy drive for the past several years, and have donated more than \$150,000 in treatment to



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5 things Dr. Bicknell can't live without

1. My wife, Katherine, and my three kids — Morgan, Macy, and Max.
2. Salt — I love cooking with my wife, and this one ingredient makes everything better.
3. Water — I love living by Lake Michigan; I can go to the beach or go boating whenever.
4. Steak!
5. A project — I like to always be working on something and learning new things.

local schools. We also supply mouth guards for youth football programs in the area. It's truly a win-win.

Professionally, what are you most proud of?

This is by all means a joke, but I'm really proud of the fact that I give away T-shirts with our practice logo on them, and patients actually wear them! I like to think that we've officially "made it" now that we have a T-shirt with our name on it. My staff and I joke about this all the time because it's such a trivial part of our practice, but I admittedly spent quite a bit of time designing the shirt. In all seriousness though, I'm proud of the fact that I consider my staff an extension of my family, and that we all share similar values: to be hardworking and kind. Being able to work in such a great, close community is also something I'm proud of and truly grateful for.

What is the future of orthodontics?

The future of orthodontics is interesting because I think there are some negative perceptions lingering around the industry right now and where it is headed. That said, I feel the opposite. I'm positive about what the future holds for orthodontics. While it's hard to predict what the future will look like for the industry, I do know that as technology

continues to evolve, so will orthodontic products and solutions. Think of it this way; 30 years ago, do you think anybody believed that one day orthodontic manufacturers would be selling digital intraoral scanners that create digital impressions in just minutes? Probably not.

Regardless of what the future may or may not hold, I believe that if orthodontists continue to lead patient-centric practices, we will be successful. Techniques and technologies may change, but the fundamentals of how you treat patients and the quality of customer service you provide should remain constant at the highest level possible.

What advice would you give to budding orthodontists?

More than anything, I like to encourage orthodontic residents and those interested in orthodontics to provide their customers with the highest quality of care possible. I believe that if you are kind, honest, and work really hard, you will be successful. What's great about this sentiment is that it applies to just about any profession. Meet your challenges head-on too — don't shy away from them. With hard work and dedication, you can be the best.

Additionally, it's imperative that you never stop learning — orthodontics is a

lifelong learning process. Even when you think you've perfected a specific technique or mastered your practice marketing, know that there is always something more to learn. Embrace this reality because at the end of the day, it will make you a much better practitioner.

What are your hobbies, and what do you do in your spare time?

I'm very family oriented, so anything that I can do with my wife and three kids is ideal. My wife and I have been into skiing quite a bit lately and actually introduced it to our kids too. We are also big fans of taking family boat trips. We live right near Lake Michigan, so on the weekends, if the weather is right, we'll take the kids out on the boat and explore different harboring towns.

What would you have been if you had not become an orthodontist?

I like this question! I would probably be a fighter pilot or astronaut, but the kind of astronaut that actually gets to go to space. A blockbuster actor would be pretty cool too. I say all these things with a sense of humor because I truly would not want to be doing anything other than what I'm doing right now. I absolutely love my job and wouldn't trade it for any other profession. **OP**