



Dr. Linda Stone

For a Dynamic Dental Personality

As Good As It Gets

BY DIANE CORNELL

Articulate and always upbeat, Linda Stone ('82) says she still loves being a dentist. To ensure the feeling of comfort, trust and congeniality and to reduce the stress typically associated with a visit to the dentist, she offers her patients soft music, soothing lighting, hot towels and a service-driven staff that puts the patient's mental and physical comfort first. And, if that were not enough, microdermabrasion, botox injections or the ability for a total makeover may be next.

Although her office will continue to stay in Livingston, N.J., as part of her plan, Dr. Stone is moving to new modernized and enlarged offices this year so she can offer her patients even more services and create comforts. Dr. Stone's practice is part of an emerging trend in spa dentistry, and it is a natural extension for a dentist who prides herself on comforting her patients and helping them achieve a beautiful smile. "I've had a patient tell me, 'I can't believe I came to the dentist to relax,'" Dr. Stone says. "It is such a compliment."

Her new offices will have ultra-plush dental chairs to further enhance the comfort of the patient's experience and to put even the dental phobic at ease. By stowing away all the excess dental equipment in cabinetry in the treatment rooms, all that is seen by the patient upon entering is the beautiful décor, massaging cushions for the chairs, warming blankets, tea, and art. "There are very few people my office staff can't win over," says Dr. Stone, who has developed a reputation for specializing in treating dental phobic patients.

Dr. Stone believes there is no limit to offering services beyond dental care — skin care, manicures and pedicures are simple, but a total makeover will be a challenge, she says. As she mulls it over, Dr. Stone decides her patient's needs and desires will set the limits. That is where the idea came from to offer skin care services. "I have a patient who worked for a plastic surgeon who suggested I offer it," she explained. And while Dr. Stone herself will stick strictly to dental care, she is open to creating a spa-like atmosphere in her treatment rooms and expanding to meet the needs of her clients. Services can easily be provided by different disciplines all directed at meeting the patient's needs.

"I look at a patient and ask, 'What will it take to make this person comfortable about coming here?' If that means offering services compatible with but extending beyond dentistry, we will do it," Dr. Stone says. "We really try to focus on the patient." Dr. Stone has participated in joint ventures and open house programs

with plastic surgeons and estheticians to offer the total makeover experience.

Dr. Stone is not afraid to go the extra mile for someone in need of care. One time, she recalls, she had a patient in her 90s who had arranged for her son to come up from Washington, D.C., just to drive her to the dentist. "When I heard about it, I said, 'That's ridiculous. I'll do it.' The patient only lived a few blocks away," Dr. Stone says. Therefore, Dr. Stone picked the woman up at her house to take her back to the dental office for treatment. "Of course, once I arrived, I had to stay and have tea and get the whole history of the house," she laughs. "When I finally came back with her, my office staff said, 'What took you so long?' However, I do dentistry because I love what I do, and I really relate to my patients. I enjoy meeting them." She adds, "I don't let dentistry get boring. I try to make it fun. I feel lucky to do what I am doing, and I share that enthusiasm with my patients."

"I look at my patients differently," Dr. Stone notes. "I don't just ask, 'How can I help you?'" Instead, Dr. Stone shows them, with hands-on applications, what the possibilities are for improving their teeth, how she can close a gap between teeth or how their teeth will look after whitening. Many times, patients are amazed at the possibilities and admit that they could not visualize what a difference such small corrections can make in their appearance.

It is the personal touches that Dr. Stone enjoys performing most and keeps her patients' comfort level high. Her skill stems from a unique background. She has held a wide range of jobs — all in the dental field. Through those experiences, she has come to know and appreciate all the varied roles and responsibilities of her dental staff. In addition, one day, she hopes to pass along her knowledge, talent and practice to her daughter Vanna, 18, who, as a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania, is planning a career in dentistry, too.

Until then, Dr. Stone's reputation and foresight has caught the attention of at least one magazine. *Garden State Woman* featured her as the cover story of their winter issue last year and in its special issue on New Jersey health.

Dr. Stone wants her patients to relax, but for her, sitting still is not an option. "Dentistry is all I have known and I love it," she enthuses. "When you create or restore someone's smile, well, that's as good as it gets." ●