

Linda Stone, D.M.D., of Gentle Caring Dentistry

Changing Patients' Lives One Smile at a Time

By Julie Jacobs

The year was 1970 when an unexpected accolade set Linda Stone, D.M.D., on a new career path in dentistry. She was then a dental hygiene student enrolled in a joint program of Union College and the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. One day, one of the dental professors stopped by her classroom and requested to speak privately with her.

"He asked, 'Who is Linda Stone?' and 'Can I see you in the hallway?'" she recounts, her eyes widening as she recalls how nervous she was about the mystery of his visit. "I said, 'What did I do?' He explained that because I had done so consistently well on all the exams, he thought I should go straight to dental school. I remember him being so emphatic about it."

Stone, who first became enamored with dentistry during a

dental course she took in high school, followed his advice. After graduating from the program as class valedictorian, she started working locally as a hygienist and took science courses at Fairleigh Dickinson University in preparation for her application to dental school. In 1978, at a time when female dentists were a rarity, she entered the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, determined to fulfill her dream. There she was one of only 10 women out of 100 students.

Four years later, Stone finished her dental education and training, and began realizing her goal to give people dazzling smiles. Today, she successfully heads her own practice, Gentle Caring Dentistry in Livingston, but she never rests on her laurels. "I'm always looking to learn more about advancements and be unique

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in the field,” she remarks.

Stone may be petite, but she thinks large in scope. Her slate of services includes general dentistry with a focus on cosmetics, full-mouth reconstruction and — what is sure to distinguish her from her colleagues here in New Jersey — spa dentistry. She is deeply committed to not only transforming smiles, but also to alleviating the anxieties so often associated with the process.

INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION RENDERS REWARDING RESULTS

“Being able to give people beautiful smiles is fun for me. I really enjoy it,” Stone says. “But I think I see things a bit differently. When I look at someone, it’s like looking at a blank canvas. And when I make a beautiful smile, it’s like creating a work of art.”

“Dentistry is so different from 20 years ago. Materials have improved, technologies have advanced and the results overall are much better,” she continues. “I can let a patient know within minutes how I can close spaces, correct misshapen teeth, etc.”

Stone treats adults and children, and is an expert in preventive care, teeth whitening, crown and bridge work, porcelain veneers, cosmetic bonding and the Invisalign system. She is a big advocate of the eight-hour smile technique, which incorporates the use of immediate load implants and requires only one surgical proce-

dure. Although a lot of planning and coordination with an oral surgeon and a periodontist are necessary for an optimal outcome, the technique reduces the need for interim prosthetics, preserves natural bone and minimizes a patient’s discomfort.

After making a “masterpiece” smile, Stone routinely stands back to examine the “frame,” or the rest of the mouth and face that surround the teeth. She is certified in lip augmentation, microdermabrasion and the use of Botox, Restalyne and Sculptra to remove wrinkles. All may be employed as part of a total smile makeover.

Providing special touches of service to perfect her patients’ dental cosmetics, as well as their experiences in the chair, is nothing new to Stone, or her patients who come from far and wide to see her. She’s been known to pick up patients from their homes and bring them to the office to help them keep their appointments.

Her individualized attention, in fact, has made her a specialist in treating phobic patients. Among her cases are a man who hadn’t been to the dentist in 25 years and needed extensive dental reconstruction; a beautiful CEO with terrible teeth who held on to Stone’s phone number for 12 months before calling; and a woman who was agoraphobic and hadn’t left her house in nearly a decade. Stone visited with her on two occasions so they could get to know one another before the woman was able to travel to

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the practice to have an eight-hour smile done.

“I believe in four ‘C’s’: comfort, compassion, communication and a feeling of control on the part of the patient,” offers Stone. “It all starts with the way our phones are answered and continues from the minute our patients walk through our door.

“Essentially, we cater to patients. If they don’t like the sound of the drill, we’ll give them headphones to put on. If they need extra support, our dental assistants will hold their hands. We want patients to be happy, so we strive to treat them the way we would want to be treated.”

It surely also helps that Stone is certified in sedation dentistry in its various forms, from nitrous oxide and oral sedation to computerized anesthesia and numbing patches. A licensed anesthesiologist is available at the patient’s request as well.

“My greatest reward is seeing these patients smile and tell me what a wonderful, life-changing experience they’ve had,” Stone says.

SERVICES ATTEND TO THE SPIRIT AND SOUL

Stone had been transforming smiles and helping people overcome their fear of dentistry for 25 years when she began feeling that there was something more she could offer to her patients. She was creating her “masterpieces,” but found that the “frames” were in need of care as well. What evolved was the concept of spa dentistry.



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Stone firmly believes that by providing services beyond traditional dental care, she can help further improve a patient's appearance as well as greatly enhance the overall office experience. From facials to microdermabrasions, Stone looks to offer it all at her new, larger, more modern practice space in Livingston, of which she recently took occupancy this past May. Such cosmetic breakthroughs as Invisilift and Restalyne are used to painlessly minimize or eradicate wrinkles above and below the lips, and lessen deep smile lines and drooping lip corners.

Invisilift is a custom-made, removable, invisible device that is worn in the mouth to literally lift and support the areas of the face that have begun to sag. It is comfortable to wear and does not affect one's speech. Restalyne is a biocompatible cosmetic dermal filler that is made of nonanimal-based hyaluronic acid. It is injected directly into the skin to restore volume and fullness and correct aging lines.

While Stone, herself, is sticking primarily to dentistry, she is in the process of assembling a cadre of plastic surgeons and aestheticians to deliver the total makeovers. Additionally, she has outfitted the space with ultra-plush dental chairs, extra cabinetry to store equipment out of sight, massaging cushions, warming blankets and scented hot towels. Patients are able to schedule spa appointments separately from their dental visits, and also avail themselves

of teas and juices, soothing music on headphones and a choice of movies on individual television monitors.

"People hate going to the dentist, but we're going to change that. Our goal is to pamper them and make them love coming here," Stone vows. "The spa component of Gentle Caring Dentistry is a natural extension to keeping our patients comfortable and stress free. Many patients have gotten so comfortable while watching a movie during their dental work, they ask if they can stay after treatment and finish the movie. It's really lovely!"

CAMARADERIE MAKES WORK A PLEASURE

Part of the pampering team, Stone's staff is a hardworking, affable group comprised of two front-desk personnel, an office manager, three hygienists, three dental assistants and a dental associate. "I love my staff," says Stone. "Even a temp that we had went back to her agency and told them she had never seen such a happy office."

The fact that Stone has held a wide range of jobs in the dental profession — beginning with dental manager and dental assistant while in high school — makes her particularly empathetic to her staff and appreciative of their many contributions to the practice. Having the opportunity to "sit in everyone's chair" also has enabled her to build a solid foundation from which to develop her own unique style as a private practitioner. Her efforts in this capacity

Dr. Stone and her daughter Vanna. The two will journey to an African orphanage, where they will spend two weeks attending to the kids and teaching caregivers basic dental techniques.



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