

DOCTOR of DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS

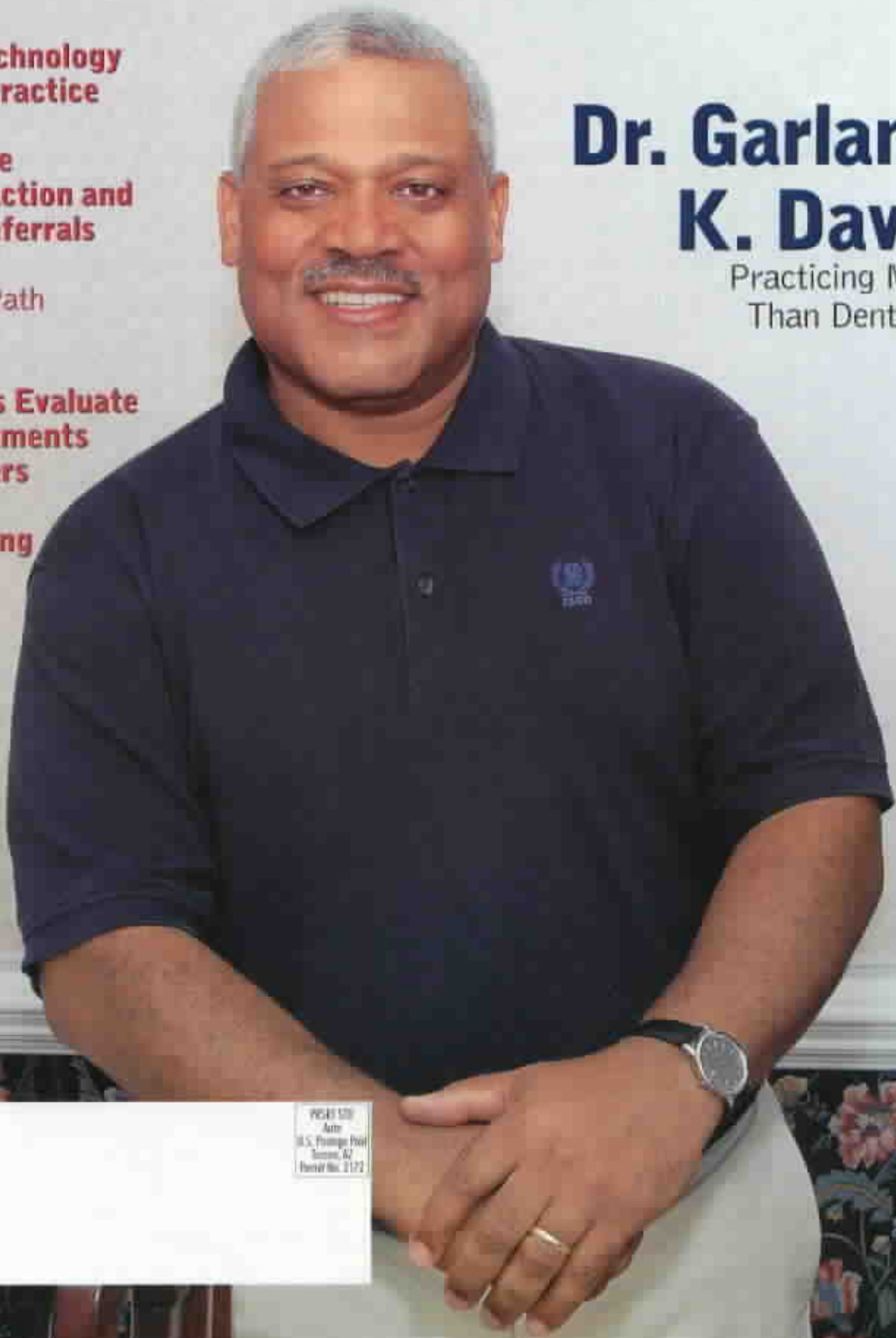
Feature
**How to Add Technology
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Sell Is Now**

A portrait of Dr. Garland K. Davis, a middle-aged man with short grey hair and a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with a small logo on the left chest and light-colored trousers. His hands are clasped in front of him, and he is wearing a watch on his left wrist and a ring on his right hand.

**Dr. Garland
K. Davis**
Practicing More
Than Dentistry

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Dr. Garland K. Davis: Practicing More than Dentistry

By Peg Silfoway

It was a toss-up for a while. Would Garland Davis be a dentist or a musician? Both involve great dedication, both require years of practice to become expert and both are close to this man's heart. His patients and staff are glad that dentistry won.

On any day you can walk into his office in Laurel, MD, and hear not only lively conversation and laughter, but just about any kind of music you like ... especially if you like jazz. Though he did choose dentistry, music is still central to Garland Davis' life. In his office, you will find piles of CD cases stacked waist high and a stereo system that sends music throughout the suite. Ask him about music and watch his face light up with his love for the art form.

MAKING A DIFFICULT DECISION

Given his passion for guitar and drums, why did Garland Davis become a dentist? It all came down to making a choice between a career in music and a career in health, both of which called to him. His mentor, a medical doctor, fueled his attraction to health care and encouraged his interest. Dr. Davis considered going to medical school, but decided that he could help people sooner by becoming a dentist. And so the choice was made.

Dr. Davis is that rare individual: a native Baltimorean. Following undergraduate studies at the University of Maryland, he received his D.D.S. from the University of Maryland Dental School in 1982. For about five years he

Dr. Davis and daughter enjoy playing music together.





Dr. Wilson, Dr. Davis and Dr. Nuñez, with their hygienists and dental assistants

worked in other practices in the Baltimore area, gaining experience and a sense of what he wanted to do when he had his own practice one day. A colleague told him about the pleasures of working in Laurel, and his interest was piqued enough that he joined a Laurel-area clinic until 1987. Following a five-year partnership with another doctor, Dr. Davis opened his own practice in 1992.

Building that practice for the last 15 years has involved a lot of learning, several course corrections and a gradual refining of the mission so that it now reflects its leader's values and standards. A significant change occurred when Dr. Davis began working with Management Experts, Inc. (MGE) in 1998. As he says, "Dental school teaches you how to fix mouths but not how to deal with people and run a business." Dr. Davis credits MGE for much of his success and the expansion of his practice because of what he learned about managing a practice through their program.

BUILDING AND REFINING THE DIRECTION

How many practices can boast that patients stop in to visit when they don't have appointments? It happens here. Dr. Davis has worked to create an environment in which his staff are happy and engaged, and where his patients feel welcome as

individuals and not just for the billings they represent.

Dr. Davis chooses his staff members carefully, for not only does each one have to work well with the rest of the team, but they also need to have the attitude he seeks. He looks for staff members who are upbeat and personable, people who like people. He knows that a positive attitude creates an environment that people like to come into, where they feel attracted to the life in the place.

While he expects a great deal of his staff, he also recognizes their contributions and supports their individual growth. There are extensive education and training opportunities that help Dr. Davis attract and retain good people to his growing practice. "I love what I do, and love the people I work with," he says. "It makes a difference when you're surrounded by people you like and who like you, and who care about the people who walk through our door."

Dr. Doreen Wilson joined Dr. Davis' practice as an associate dentist in 2003 and brought with her a varied background and determination to make a difference. After graduating from Howard University in 1984, Dr. Wilson did her residency at Booth Memorial Hospital in Queens, NY. She received her certificate in prosthodontics in 1989 from the Columbia University School of Oral Surgery. As assistant medical direc-



Dr. Nuñez, Dr. Wilson and Dr. Davis

tor at a health center in New York, she ran a 14-chair dental clinic and then had her own practice in Yonkers, NY, until 2003, when she sold it and moved to Laurel. Dr. Wilson's strong belief in giving back to the community is not just words; she has participated in medical missions to Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and South Africa, taking time from her life and work here to make a difference where it matters.

A recent addition to the practice as an associate is Dr. Christian Nuñez, who graduated from the University of Miami and Temple University Dental School. His hiring is proof that Dr. Davis' practice is using all the technology tools at its disposal — Dr. Nuñez saw and responded to Dr. Davis' online ad for an associate. Dr. Nuñez brings special talents and skills to the practice, for he is certified with Biolase, is known for his fine root canal work and is great with children.

No matter how skilled and caring the professional staff, a dental practice needs a top-notch manager if it is to be successful. Dr. Davis' office manager, Shawn Dugar, has been with him for about six years. She is highly trained

and skilled in all facets of running the office. As Dr. Davis says, "Shawn is a tremendous asset in that she affords me the freedom to be out the office and know it will operate at an optimum level." Shawn is another example of his strong belief in having a well-trained staff who understand and embrace his philosophy. Shawn and the staff help patients achieve optimal dental health in an efficient but happy environment that leaves

Administrative staff





Dr. Davis using his computer-aided CEREC system

them satisfied and coming back for more, and referring their friends and family.

LEARNING AND GROWING

Weekly staff meetings are lively and highly interactive, to say the least. But they go beyond the standard "How are we doing and where are we going?" meetings you can find in almost any office. They look at what happened, of course, but the focus is on where did they have success? What were their wins? Dr. Davis is a firm believer that you get more of what you focus on, and this office focuses on what they are doing right and how they can do more of it.

When you spend some time with Dr. Davis, you learn quickly that this is a man who does not believe in limits, whether personal or professional. Can a dental practice in Laurel, MD, become one of the top practices in the country in terms of financial success and services offered? He says yes, and he's just the one to do it. Dr. Davis sees the practice as a constant work in progress, saying, "Every day I walk in here with the idea I can do better than the day before."

The practice is currently expanding into larger facilities, doubling operatories from four to eight, installing state-of-the-art equipment and adding staff to support the expansion. Dr. Davis will offer more services including implants, laser whitening, Invisalign, lasers for soft-tissue work and digital radiography. The practice will also expand its capabilities in computer-aided dental reconstruction such as CEREC, a system for fabricating ceramic crowns, onlays and veneers in a single office visit. He explains the expansion plans simply: "If you're not growing, you're contracting." Dr. Davis markets actively and widely, using radio, TV, flyers, mailers, postcards, etc. He is instituting a referral program for clients and is active in the community as well. As the practice grows, Dr. Davis sees his role as focusing on case presentation, providing education and explaining treatment plans, while creating the personal connection that is the basis for successful treatment.

CREATING HARMONY

All that ambition might seem single minded, but there are



PHOTO BY C.C. FREDERICK

Dr. Davis and his wife Twahanna, relaxing at home

other facets to Dr. Davis. One of the ways he puts his belief in giving back into practice is volunteering in the area of prison reform. He works in prisons with counselors and groups to get prisoners off drugs, and then to educate them in communication, literacy and basic study skills. Through building self-esteem and self-respect, Dr. Davis works to keep prisoners

clean and make it possible for them to return to society with the tools to change their lives.

Making a difference is a family tradition for Dr. Davis. His wife, Twahanna, is an artist who also works in the dental practice as the business officer and treasurer. Son, Gil, a graduate of Brown University, teaches elementary school in Boston, while daughter, Glynn, is a sophomore at Howard High School, enjoying sports, theater and — of course — music.

Helping people is at the core of everything Garland Davis does. He is driven to constantly improve, both individually and in his practice. As he says, "We try to help as best we can. Sometimes it's more than just teeth. You come to my practice and you will find a place you want to come back to." ■

When you spend some time with Dr. Davis, you learn quickly that this is a man who does not believe in limits, whether personal or professional. Can a dental practice in Laurel, MD, become one of the top practices in the country in terms of financial success and services offered? He says yes, and he's just the one to do it. Dr. Davis sees the practice as a constant work in progress, saying, 'Every day I walk in here with the idea I can do better than the day before.'