

DOCTOR of DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS

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Dr. Schembari

**Dr. Vincent Schembari:
One Focus, Many Facets**

Dr. Vincent Schembari: One Focus, Many Facets

By Peg Silloway



Ask Vince Schembari what gets him up in the morning, what drives his passion for family dentistry, and your answer is in the grin on his face. "I like to make people happy," he says. "I want to make them smile, to make them feel good about their smile and to feel better about themselves. A good smile removes barriers and helps people make relationships."

This focus on making people feel good is clear when you walk through the door of Schembari Family Dentistry in Laurel. There is a comfortable air of busy familiarity in the way the staff members greet you, whether you're a first-time visitor or old friend. No institutional gray or green here — the colors are welcoming and homey. Even adults may be tempted to spend a few seconds in the children's area that waits just inside the door with its tempting, touchable toys. With no glass barrier to separate the staff from the patients, it's easy to chat and take care of the necessary paperwork at the reception desk.

Building a successful family dental practice takes more than just friendly faces and welcoming spaces, of course. In his 17 years as a dentist, Dr. Schembari has focused on his overarching goals: providing his patients with good oral health, preventing pain and fear of dentists and helping patients achieve a beautiful, healthy smile and fully functional dentition. When he accomplishes those, the rewards are greatest for him and for his patients.

THE EDUCATION OF A FAMILY DENTIST

Dr. Schembari decided early in his career to focus on family dentistry. As he says, "Family is everything," for his practice,



The children's area with touchable toys

and for him personally. As children of Italian immigrants who lacked formal education, Dr. Schembari and his brother and sister learned early to place a high value on education. In his teens, he was already interested in dentistry as a possible career, influenced by his own positive experiences when he needed a dentist, orthodontist and oral surgeon. When career day came around in high school, he considered both medicine and dentistry, and went out to visit medical and dental offices. There he found a difference that strongly influenced his decision: The medical doctors tended to be too busy and not interested in talking with him, but the dentists were happy to take the time and share information with him. He learned that he could build his own business on his own terms, and realized, "I could do this."

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Dr. Schembari's undergraduate years at Rutgers University were followed by postgraduate studies at Georgetown University School of Dentistry. Like many talented dental professionals, he could have chosen to go on and specialize, but again the desire to include the whole family in his practice helped him decide. He enjoys working with all ages — young children, adolescents, adults and seniors. And now, an added reward is that he is starting to see second generations coming to his office for care.

TAKING AWAY THE PAIN

Asked what he feels are his strongest skills, Dr. Schembari grins and says, "I give a great injection." For, as he says, "If you can make the painful part comfortable, people appreciate it and they know you really care." The appreciation he receives from his patients is, he admits, "a rush."

In addition to his ability to give painless injections, Dr. Schembari is skilled at selecting and training his staff. He believes that finding and training not just qualified

Dr. Schembari using painless
Waterlase treatment



and skilled assistants, but also people who will share his philosophy of care, are key to ensuring that every patient is treated right. Dr. Schembari personally trains all his dental assistants and pays for their education. In Maryland, dental assistants must have practical work experience before they can take formal training. Then they can go on to formal training followed by certification, licensing and the expanded function license. All of Dr. Schembari's assistants have the highest degree of ability and are all X-ray certified. Though it takes more time and requires more attention, Dr. Schembari is sure that by doing the initial training, his staff all work with his approach and attitude. In selecting the other two doctors who work in the practice, Dr. Bonnie Hiers and Dr. Todd Patton, he chose people he knew would treat all patients as he would — with the finest technical skills and the most caring personal attitude. That approach and attitude are what have made his practice grow and be successful.

It's easy to say, "We care about our patients." What sets Schembari Family Dentistry apart is how those words are transformed into action. At the end of the day, Dr. Schembari calls all the patients he has seen to be sure they are all right. As he points out, when patients leave still numb from dental anesthesia, they can't tell if everything feels normal. Later when the anesthesia wears off,

it's important to be sure they are not feeling anything that could indicate a problem — so he calls to make sure.

Though the focus is on general dentistry, Schembari Family Dentistry offers many of the increasingly popular cosmetic services. Interestingly, Dr. Schembari is seeing that the boomer generation is seeking more cosmetic dentistry — whitening, Invisalign, Lumineers — as they move into a new phase of life that often includes new careers and an active lifestyle.

GEOCACHING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Besides being cheerleader, mentor and chief trainer, Dr. Schembari is also the computer and technology guru for this high-tech office. They use lasers for fillings, gum procedures and for whitening teeth. Digital X-rays give an instant view of the teeth and expose patients to less than half the normal amount of radiation.

When he's not tinkering with technology in the office, or creating a beautiful smile for a patient, you'll find Dr. Schembari with his wife and three sons. Whether it's Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, camping, traveling or spending time at the beach, the Schembari family enjoys their time together. One unique family hobby takes them into the woods on guided treasure hunts. Geocaching (pro-

Dr. Hiers, Dr. Schembari and Dr. Patton with the administrative staff





Dental hygienists and dental assistants

nounced "geo-caching") is a growing sport that you do when and where you like. Go online to geocaching.com and you'll learn there are more than 364,000 caches hidden around the world, a couple thousand of which are in Laurel alone, and some 50,000 people in Maryland are geocachers. Using a handheld GPS (global positioning system) device, you enter the coordinates of a cache location and then find "treasures" left by others by finding your way to the specific site. As Dr. Schembari says, "It gets you outdoors, and you see places you would not see otherwise." One of the family's favorite areas for exploration is around Deep Creek Lake in western Maryland.

"Family" extends beyond home and office for Dr. Schembari. Community involvement is also important. For many years he has been active with the Baltimore-Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce and has served on their board of directors. Through the Laurel Lions Club, Lions International civic group and through the Knights of Columbus, he gives back to the community. At the Anthony Gatto Lodge of the Sons of Italy, Dr. Schembari gets to speak Italian and enjoy the food and culture of his parents' homeland. Kids become the focus each February during Children's Dental Health Month. Dr. Schembari visits preschools, kindergartens and grade schools in Laurel where he talks to more than 200 children each year.

IT'S ALL A MATTER OF CARING

What brings patients to Schembari Family Dentistry? Dr. Schembari has built this practice to serve the person seeking a quality dentist who will look out for the patient and treat their needs — not just what an insurance company says they can have. This person may be apprehensive about seeing a dentist but knows that they need dental care. That's fine — Dr. Schembari understands that the dentist can be scary, and he and his staff work hard to make each visit comfortable and reassuring. Mostly, Dr. Schembari loves to work with families who want to start early with proper dental health for everyone from youngster to senior.

Dr. Schembari learned long ago that the old saying is true: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. He has built his life and practice around demonstrating that care in every facet of his professional and family life. Infusing that focus on care into the training of his staff and by daily demonstration, Dr. Schembari believes that his philosophy of helping people, and his way of working, will continue for years to come. ■