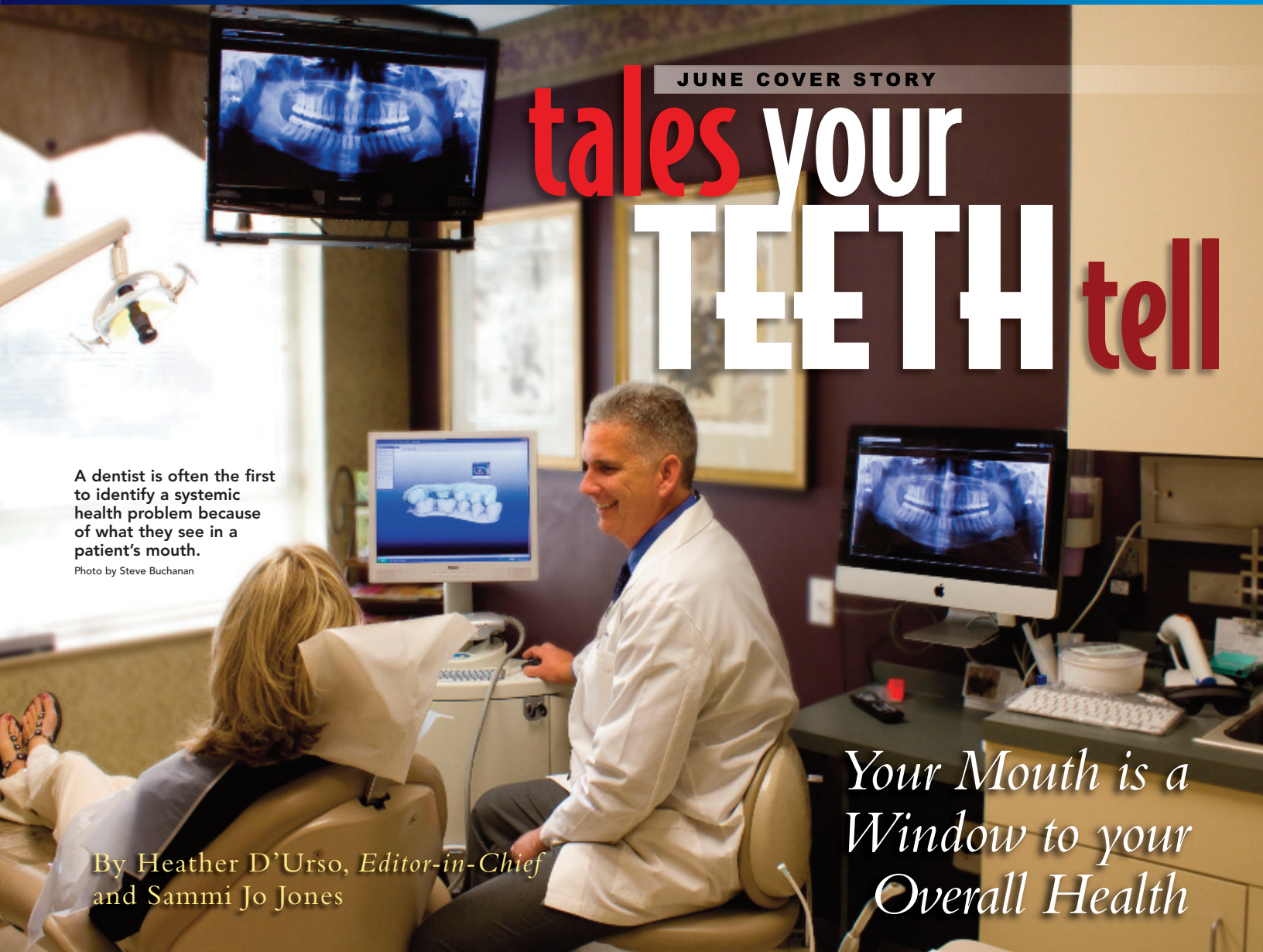


JUNE COVER STORY

tales your TEETH tell

A dentist is often the first to identify a systemic health problem because of what they see in a patient's mouth.

Photo by Steve Buchanan

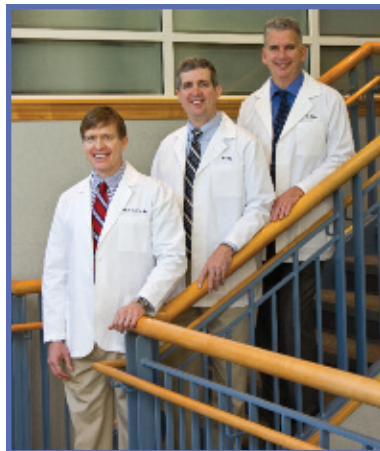


Your Mouth is a Window to your Overall Health

By Heather D'Urso, Editor-in-Chief and Sammi Jo Jones

Cheryl Pruitt was surprised when the surgeon replacing her knee required a complete dental work up prior to surgery. "It was a real wake up call," she says. "I had no idea I would need to go to the dentist before getting knee surgery." Pruitt, a corporate human resources specialist from Millersville, needed her dentist to verify that she didn't have any bacterial infections, such as nerve abscesses, gum disease or plaque build up on her teeth.

"I didn't know my teeth would be an issue and that my knee replacement could fail if I had poor dental hygiene," she recalls. In Pruitt's case, an existing oral infection could travel through her bloodstream directly to the artificial knee, jeopardizing the surgery's success.



For three generations, the McCarl family has been passionate about teeth. Pictured are today's dental crusaders, Drs. Clayton, Jay and David McCarl.

Photo by Steve Buchanan

ardizing the surgery's success.

Pruitt's situation is not unusual. Many people don't realize how important their oral health is to their overall health. And therefore, don't put much credence on daily brushing and flossing. According to the FDA, lack of daily brushing and flossing is why more than 75 percent of Americans over 35 have some form of gingivitis or gum disease. Alarmingly, gum disease can lead to heart disease, diabetes, dementia, arthritis, respiratory disease and pregnancy complications.

TOTB met with local oral health crusaders, the McCarl Dental Group, to learn more. The practice, located in Millersville and Greenbelt, is driven to not only take care of teeth and gums, but

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to educate patients about the benefits of good oral health.

Starting with Dr. James W. McCarl in 1924, three generations later dental excellence continues in today's practice run by his grandsons, Drs. David, Clayton Jr. and Jay McCarl and his granddaughter, Sally, a hygienist.

Healthy Mouth = Healthy Body

"Researchers are discovering that oral health is a reliable predictor of overall health," says Clayton.

Within every mouth lurk scads of bacteria which thrive when we fail to brush and floss daily. "Dental plaque is a sticky film of bacteria that forms around your teeth and on your gums," he says. "Plaque can harden within 24 hours, requiring a professional cleaning to get it off."

"Gingivitis, tender and swollen gums that sometimes bleed when you brush, is often the first symptom of plaque build-up," says Clayton. "If gingivitis progresses, severe periodontal disease can develop." This is a chronic bacterial infection when gum tissue pulls away from the teeth, allowing the bacteria to destroy the underlying bone that holds your teeth in place. "Oral bacteria can also escape into the bloodstream where it increases inflammation and systematic illnesses elsewhere in the body," adds Clayton.

"We used to tell patients that they should only floss the teeth they want to keep," Sally shares. "Now there is a lot more at stake. Flossing and dental hygiene have been linked to longer healthier lives."

The Good News

Plaque and bacteria can be kept under control! "Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and floss daily. Use an antimicrobial mouth wash to reduce the bacteria in your mouth," says Jay.

"We hear a wide range of excuses for not flossing," says Sally. "One of the excuses I hear most often is 'My gums bleed when I floss – it must be bad for me.' The reason for bleeding is that the gums are infected from food



Listen to your hygienist: floss once a day, brush your teeth twice daily, visit the dentist regularly, don't smoke, and eat a balanced diet. Pictured is hygienist Sally McCarl Moore. Photo by Steve Buchanan

and plaque trapped between your teeth and gums," explains Sally. "When the plaque is removed on a daily basis, your gums will no longer be inflamed and will stop bleeding. Healthy gums do not bleed."

Because some gingivitis symptoms are not painful, it often remains undiagnosed and untreated. Damage caught early can be reversed.

Jaw-Dropping Advances

"Our grandfather was one of the best dentists in this region," says David, "but as the years went by, even he had a full set of dentures. That was typical of dental care in the 1940's and '50's. Dentists cleaned teeth, filled cavities, pulled teeth and made dentures."

"Back in the 1940s, the average patient would come in with twelve to fifteen cavities," says David. "That was before fluoride and flossing. Today, children come in for fluoride treatments twice a year. We don't see nearly as many cavities in young people, because we've put sealants on their permanent teeth."



Ask around, finding a dental practice you trust and feel comfortable with is key to having a healthy mouth. Pictured is the McCarl Dental practice's Millersville lobby. Photo by Steve Buchanan

To the casual observer it may appear as nothing has changed in dentistry; however, in the past few years technology has allowed dentists to achieve better results for their patients in shorter periods of time, with greater comfort.

“Digital dentistry is the biggest recent change in our profession,” says Clayton.

In their six high-tech treatment rooms, the McCarls offer the high speed Cadent iTero digital scanner which takes digital images of your teeth that can be manipulated by the dentist and then sent over the internet to a lab where precise models are made.

“Patients no longer need to have goop put into their mouths to make a dental impression” says David. “The veneers, crowns, and bridges produced from those models are a perfect fit. Scanning is the future. Soon, rubber impressions will be a thing of the past.”

The McCarl’s Panorex digital x-ray machine, with one-tenth the radiation of regular radiography, takes images painlessly from outside the mouth; a great improvement from the uncomfortable bitewing x-rays put inside your mouth.

“Dentistry is becoming ‘metal-free’” says David. The practice stopped using metal fillings fifteen years ago. “Durable porcelain crowns that have the translucency of natural teeth, porcelain veneers and smile makeovers are all new or improved in this generation.” David adds, “my dad spent 2 ½ hours on a crown that I can do in 45 minutes.”

The McCarl Group offers custom professional whitening “at cost” to their patients. “Our society loves instant solutions, but we find that it is better to whiten gradually so that it is possible to adapt the treatment immediately if sensitivity occurs,” says Clayton. “Whitening technology is constantly improving and we are researching the latest advances. We add new technologies only after research confirms that it is a great option for our patients with minimal side effects. ‘Mall bleaching’ and other hyped techniques can leave a patient with sensitive teeth, short term results and other problems.”

Technological advances make it possible for the McCarl Group to offer orthodontic care as well.



More than just a pretty smile, clean teeth and healthy gums are a sign of total body health. Pictured is Ellen Allen from Millersville, a patient of the McCarl Dental Group. Photo by Heather Crowder



The McCarl Dental Group’s office in Millersville. Photo by Steve Buchanan

“If you don’t have a nice smile, we can help you get one!” states Jay. “Crooked teeth are harder to clean and can lead to gum disease. We can straighten your teeth with Invisalign or porcelain veneers. The veneers are stronger, thinner and more durable than the veneers of twenty years ago. Invisalign makes orthodontics workable for adults who have always wanted straight teeth, or have had relapse from braces as a teenager.”

Above and Beyond

Finding a dentist that you can trust and feel comfortable with takes some effort. Jay feels one of the biggest assets of McCarl Dental Group is the staff. “Our staff is well trained and good at what they do,” Jay asserts. “They are like our extended family. They are very good at making people feel comfortable. I believe it is because they really do care about our patients.”

And resoundingly each patient *TOTB* spoke to agrees. Amanda, a 12-year old patient, broke her front tooth the night before her family’s vacation. After a phone call to Dr. Jay, Amanda was in the chair by 11 p.m. and able to travel the next morning.

Karen Daborowski needed an emergency root canal during February’s ‘snowmageddon’. What did the McCarl Group do? Shoveled and plowed their way to the office to fix her tooth.

Millersville patient Ellen Allen concurs, adding “The McCarls offer great service and have a super, well-run office. I’ve been there since the practice opened and the dentists, hygienists and entire staff go above and beyond for me.”

For more information on the latest news in dentistry or the **McCarl Dental Group**, visit www.McCarlDental.com or go to its Facebook page www.Facebook.com/McCarlDental.

Millersville office: **410.987.8800**, Shipley’s Choice Medical Park, 8601 Veterans Highway, Suite 101, Millersville, MD 21108. Hours: Mon. & Tues., 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Wed., 9 a.m. – 8 p.m., Thurs., 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Fri., 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Greenbelt office: **301.474.4144**. Visit TasteOfTheBay.com for more testimonials by the McCarl’s patients.