

DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS



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AAACD FAGD

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By Tonya Poole

When asked why she became a dentist, Dr. Joyce Bassett's answer is simple: "My dad told me not to do it." Like most teenagers, Bassett didn't like following the rules, but at age 16, she took it a step further when she quit high school and enrolled in college and then, at the age of 19, enrolled in dental school despite harsh objections from her father.

"He wanted me to be an M.D.," says Bassett, who at 23 was the youngest student to graduate from Ohio State University's College of Dentistry.

But after launching her practice fresh out of college, Bassett quickly lost interest in the field when the complications of business processes, day-to-day management chores, staff challenges and wrangling with insurance companies became overwhelming. Having no idea what to expect in the field, and no one to serve as a mentor or cheerleader for her progress, Bassett quickly grew to hate coming to work each day.

"They don't teach you the business aspects in school," she says. "It was all technical, clinical. I had no idea it was so much *work* just to run a dental practice."

Dr. Bassett's new state-of-the-art facility located in North Scottsdale at 101 and Raintree.



Images displaying completed smile design patients by Dr. Joyce Bassett used in her marketing in magazines and in her halls of photos.

Within two years, frustrated and burned out, she was ready to call it quits.

A SHIFT IN FOCUS

Enter Bassett's friend, Dr. Rich Cohen, whose advice would ultimately be responsible for a change in Bassett's career that would renew her fascination with dentistry, and one day catapult her to the top of her profession. At Cohen's suggestion, she enrolled in full-mouth reconstruction, TMD and centric relation courses. During her studies, she became entrenched in the subject matter and began reading related journals and publications, which exposed her to an exciting new arena in dentistry: cosmetics.

Bassett enrolled in the first live-patient and over-the-shoulder post-graduate cosmetic dentistry courses at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland in 1994. She went on to study advanced cosmetics on live patients at programs at Baylor College with Larry Rosenthal and Bob Nixon, and at the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies with Bill Dickerson and David Hornbrook. She began her accreditation process for AACD. The accreditation process is a rigorous program which requires dentists to attend continuing education courses, be tested and submit a number of cosmetic cases to be judged by a panel of cosmetic dentistry experts.



PHOTO BY MARK SQUIRE

Dr. Bassett team members display one of her award-winning smiles.

Today, Dr. Bassett is the only female accredited by the AACD in Arizona, earned when she became one of 200 dentists worldwide to pass this rigorous case presentation exam. Bassett also serves as Fellow in the International Academy of Dental-Facial Aesthetics and is past president and a Fellow in the Academy of General Dentistry. She’s been elected to active membership in the American Academy of Fixed Prosthodontics.

A WINNING TEAM

Dr. Bassett credits much of her success to her skilled team: Business Manager Melissa Fahl; dental assistants Brook Moore, Ashley Dufault, Elisabeth Colombo and Hannah Smith; registered dental hygienists Shawna Aguirre and Sheila Lorick; Office Manager Mary Murphy; Treatment Plan Coordinator Sondra Wagner, and Lisa Billiack.

Dr. Bassett’s smile design team includes world-renowned boutique ceramist Brad Patrick, and together they have worked on thousands of smile designs from models, athletes TV personalities, business executives and stay-at-home moms. Both Bassett and Patrick and their award-winning work have been featured on the front cover of *Practical Procedures & Aesthetic Dentistry* (PPAD), *Contemporary Esthetics* and the AACD’s *Journal of Cosmetic Dentistry*. She also credits Rick Durkee at Lafayette Dental Lab for his fixed

prosthetics and implant restorations.

Bassett and staff work from a new state-of-the-art facility in Scottsdale, a 6,000-square-foot building home to 10 technologically advanced operatories and equipment, such as a digital radiology, a sterile water purification system and a variety of laser technologies.

WOMEN TEACHING WOMEN

Brainstorming in a speaker-ready room at a conference with Dr. Thomas Trinkner, the idea was born for bringing together women who were accredited to sit down and talk with women who weren’t, and guiding them through mentorship programs to accelerate their progress.

“It was amazing, but it wasn’t enough,” says Bassett, who says that the surge of women asking questions and soliciting advice was so great that, even after the panel had gone over its allotted time, women continued to come up to the microphone to ask for guidance.

The experience uncovered a large gap in the field of dentistry—an unmet need for women to connect with and learn from one another and to build on the experiences of other successful women to achieve greater success in their careers.

Bassett’s early experience, and burnout, in dentistry—and her decade-long journey to passing accreditation—supported the idea



"Can I get a 'J'?" Dr. Joyce Bassett proudly presents her "Smiles by Joyce" logo.

Dr. Bassett, Shawna Aguirre, RDH, Mary Murphy and Sheila Lorick, RDH.



PHOTOS BY MARK SQUIRE

and provided the motivation she needed to build a training program designed by women, for women, in the clinical, business and lifestyle aspects of cosmetic dentistry. Soon after, the Women Teaching Women center, a full-featured facility in Bassett's complex, was born.

At the center, women will learn the technical, business and lifestyle components that all work together to create a rewarding career. All courses will be taught at accreditation level.

The center can facilitate up to 20 women at each three-day course, and it includes a lecture hall, a ceramics laboratory and 10 operatories equipped with the same technology Dr. Bassett uses for her patients. Classes will focus on over-the-shoulder and live-patient training in clinical techniques of cosmetic dentistry. These will include smile analysis and design, porcelain and composite technology, and other related topics. There will also be classes held in the evenings for assistants and hygienists who live locally. These classes will focus on updating an assistant's techniques on bonding and provisionalization. The hygienists will learn how to prepare the gingiva for cosmetic procedures, how to remove bonding materials after cementation, and how to maintain the tooth/veneer interface post-operatively. All staff will learn verbal techniques to educate and inform their patients about cosmetic dentistry.

Currently, there are just 200 AACD-accredited cosmetic dentists worldwide. Bassett says her goal is to have 200 female cosmetic dentists accredited with the AACD worldwide by the time she retires.

Asked why she chose to focus specifically on women, Dr. Bassett suggests that many women feel less confident about asking questions and seeking advice from men in the field.

"There's a different energy when women are studying with other women," she says. "I'm not trying to be a feminist—I just feel there's a segment of female dentists out there who value the mentoring relationships offered by other women."

But Bassett also adds that by focusing on women, she's not suggesting that men are excluded. She understands that in some cases, the most talented professional in a given subject area may happen to be a man, and would gladly invite them to come teach and participate.

"I've gotten a little flack from men over it," jokes Bassett. "So I was thinking perhaps we'd set up a new division: How about *Women Teaching Men*? To turn knowledge back around and re-inject it into your profession, that's one of the ultimate things you can do with your career."

For more information on the WTW learning facility, please contact the center's executive director, Melissa Fahl, at (480) 367-8889. For more information about smile design, or to schedule an appointment, please contact Mary Murphy at (480) 376-8889. ■