

# suburbanlife



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**Dr. Scott K. Smith** is as highly regarded for his compassion in treating each patient as he is for his expertise in periodontics, dental implants, and facial aesthetics.

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# FROM THE Heart

Dr. Scott K. Smith is as highly regarded for his compassion in treating each patient as he is for his expertise in periodontics, dental implants, and facial aesthetics.

by PETE CROATTO  
photography by JODY ROBINSON

## **Scott K. Smith, D.D.S., and his staff have adapted to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 world.**

Every team member in their King of Prussia office, including the front-desk staff, wears a protective facemask. Patients come into the office one at a time, entering through one door and exiting through another. UV light sterilizes the air and surfaces of all treatment rooms, with each operatory going unused for an hour after an appointment.

Patients who visit his office can expect these new protocols and precautions to remain in place for the immediate future. They will leave once COVID-19 leaves, but the human touch never will.

“If there’s anything we can do to make that person feel better, we’re going to do it,” says Dr. Smith, a board-certified periodontist with additional expertise in dental implants and facial aesthetics who has been in practice since 1993. “Under the current circumstances, we’re all about focusing on the compassion

of myself and the staff.”

This is not an awakening for Dr. Smith as much as it is a reflection of who he is. His patients appreciate his accomplishments, clinical skills, and cutting-edge equipment, but those aren’t what they value most about him; rather, they appreciate the fact that he treats every patient with dignity and respect. He credits his father, a dentist, for teaching him the value of the so-called Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Even so, Dr. Smith’s treatment approach took a life-changing turn in his early 30s, when he was diagnosed with colon cancer. He had always been obsessed with becoming a better doctor. After his cancer battle, he still devoted himself to continually enhancing his clinical skills, but he also set out to focus on patients’ “total care.” Now, he works to

repair and rebuild patients’ self-worth, as well as perfect the form and function of their smiles.

“He has an innate ability to connect with people,” says Rebecca Hodges, Dr. Smith’s patient care coordinator. “There are people who are terrified to go to the dentist or have a surgical procedure. Time and time again, they come out saying, ‘I’ve never had a doctor put me so at ease.’ He connects with them in a personal way, from the heart.”

### **Beyond the Smile**

Dr. Smith’s calling is rooted in improving patients’ lives, and in some cases even saving them. Untreated periodontal disease—infections of the gums—can do much more than harm the mouth’s health, function, and appearance. It can also have a disastrous impact on the entire body.

Periodontal disease has been linked to life-threatening conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and preterm

births. Research suggests moderate to severe periodontal disease increases the level of bodily inflammation, which is part of all chronic inflammatory diseases. Furthermore, the same bacterial strains commonly found in periodontal pockets surrounding diseased teeth have been found in the arterial plaque of individuals with cardiovascular disease.

“We have evolved from just treating disease to now restoring what has been lost due to disease, extractions, or trauma,” says Dr. Smith. “Now we’re also involved with aesthetics: How do we make that smile better? We’re doing a lot of facial aesthetics because the smile does not stop with the teeth and the gums. It extends to the entire face.”

Dr. Smith adopted this comprehensive approach 12 years ago. He had finished a new set of teeth for a patient and felt he had nailed the job. He couldn’t wait for the patient’s reaction. Instead, she talked about her disappointment related to the age-related creases around her mouth. Today, he offers the services of an in-house aesthetician for patients looking for aesthetic services to address fine lines, wrinkles, and blemishes. Dr. Smith, who has extensive training in facial aesthetics, can handle the more sophisticated requests.

“I have done additional years of training in areas of bone regeneration and soft-tissue regeneration,” he adds. “I’ve done years of work to understand how to master the skillset necessary for surgical procedures, but, more importantly, how to understand what is going to be the best way to provide the optimum treatment for that patient. It’s not so much what we can do with our hands, but about our understanding on how the body works and the biology of healing.”

### ‘The Best of All Worlds’

Dr. Smith has earned his reputation as a



specialist in dental implants. In fact, he often trains colleagues on the finer points of placing implants. He wants each patient to not only have a good result, but also to have a good experience along the way—beginning with impressions.

Anyone who has ever had impressions of their teeth taken likely remembers the experience for all the wrong reasons. Under Dr. Smith’s care, rather than biting into the goo used to make a mold, patients sit back as he uses a wand to create a “complete 3D rendering” of the person’s entire mouth. Dr. Smith then sends this digital image, along with a CT scan, to a lab to create the patient’s new teeth.

When placing an implant, Dr. Smith often uses a 3D surgical navigation tool known as the X-Nav to provide a bull’s-eye, of sorts. This tool allows him to build off his understanding of the anatomy to ensure optimal placement, within a half-millimeter. It also helps to avoid vital structures such as blood vessels, nerves, and the roots of surrounding teeth.

Whether someone needs treatment for severe periodontitis, aesthetic services to turn back the clock, or dental implants to make the mouth whole again, Dr. Smith can perform all of these procedures safely at his office, which he

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describes as “a high-tech, low-stress environment.” As a result, patients can have multiple needs met under one roof, thereby eliminating the need for referrals or excessive wait times elsewhere.

As Dr. Smith discusses new technology and developments in his field, it becomes clear that he is someone who loves his job—not to mention the staff, patients, and other dental professionals with whom he interacts on a given workday.

“Constantly learning, constantly teaching, it’s the best of all worlds,” he says. “I can help people feel better about themselves. To see somebody feel so much better, to regain that confidence—that is what brings me the greatest excitement and joy.” ■



**DR. SMITH WAS DIAGNOSED WITH COLON CANCER IN HIS EARLY 30S. AFTER THIS LIFE-CHANGING EVENT, HE SET OUT TO FOCUS ON PATIENTS’ “TOTAL CARE”— PERFECTING THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF THEIR SMILES, BUT ALSO REPAIRING THEIR SELF-WORTH.**



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