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Drs. Andrew and Andrea Appel follow the example set by his father to lead **Appel Orthodontics** and **Brace Busters** into the next generation.

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CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

by **MATT COSENTINO**
photo by **ALISON DUNLAP**

DRS. ANDREW AND ANDREA APPEL FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY HIS FATHER TO LEAD APPEL ORTHODONTICS AND BRACE BUSTERS INTO THE NEXT GENERATION.

role than a clinical one. A true family enterprise, the team includes Dr. Andrew's wife, Andrea Appel, D.D.S., who goes by "Dr. Andi." Lauren G. Wulc, D.M.D., joined the practice as an associate doctor in 2021.

As a child, Dr. Andrew always took notice of his father's joy for his profession. He remembers deciding early on that he would follow in his dad's footsteps. As a 7-year-old, while hanging around his father's office, he took three business cards off his father's desk, crossed out Steven's name and wrote his own. From that point on, his future career seemed preordained.

Sure enough, Dr. Andrew's interest never faded as he progressed through high school, college, and dental school. Upon completing his clinical training and education, he received a surprise from his mother.

"She had saved the three business cards and had them framed to give me as a graduation gift," Dr. Andrew says. "We decided to hang it in our consultation room in the office, and now we use the framed cards as an anecdote when we talk to parents and younger kids. It shows if there's anything a child wants to do, if they're determined and work hard for it then they can achieve whatever they want."

Dr. Andrew joined his father's practice in 2013. Together they have taken it to another level, creating a culture of excellence and a family-like environment.

"We put endless effort into consistently training our team to be better," Dr. Andrew says. "We will move people into different positions in the office to better suit their skill set; we hold

a lot of team-building exercises. We're just really supportive of the people who work here."

That philosophy aligns perfectly with that of the Breslers, the family behind the prominent pediatric dentistry practice known as Doc Bresler's Cavity Busters. The Breslers have long referred patients in need of braces or Invisalign to Appel Orthodontics, impressed with the Appels' commitment to quality care, customer service, and overall patient experience.

About seven years ago, with the number of referrals outpacing the physical capabilities of Appel Orthodontics' office, the two families decided to create a joint venture called Brace Busters, which now has locations in Dresher, Roxborough, and South Philadelphia. Accepting all forms of insurance, including state-funded plans such as Medicaid, the concept has taken off and allowed a greater number of patients to receive the highest-quality treatment.

Appel Orthodontics also provides free braces and orthodontic care—up to one patient per month, indefinitely—to children, young adults, or adults who are in remission for cancer. The program, called Smiles for Survivors, is especially meaningful to Dr. Andrew, a survivor of Hodgkin's lymphoma who has been in remission since 2016. He was attending a benefit concert in 2018 when he got inspired to give back. Using his skills as an orthodontist seemed to be the best way.

One patient is already receiving orthodontic treatment, with two more in the pipeline. The practice hopes to spread the word and let other cancer survivors know about the opportunity.

"It's great to be able to deliver a nice aesthetic smile to somebody who's been through an experience that took a lot of their confidence away," Dr. Andrew says. "I hope 20 years from now, I can look back and say we provided hundreds of thousands of dollars of pro bono orthodontic care to cancer-surviving patients."

It seems like a forgone conclusion that Appel Orthodontics and Brace Busters will both still be going strong in two decades. Dr. Andi was working for one of the country's most renowned orthodontists in her native Michigan when she met Dr. Andrew at a national conference. She has only added to the two practices since joining in 2019.

"I can't overstate the tremendous asset that she has been," Dr. Andrew says. "She came here and had a lot of ideas as an outside set of eyes on ways that we could improve what we were doing. "While my dad will enjoy a well-deserved retirement from clinical care, I'm excited about the future with Andrea and I moving forward." ■

➔ **For more information on Appel Orthodontics or Brace Busters, call (215) 676-3070 or visit appelortho.com and bracebusters.com.**