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**At Feet First Podiatry,**  
**Dr. Maggie Solimeo** makes  
meaningful connections with  
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pertaining to the foot and ankle.

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# BUILDING BONDS

## One Foot at a Time

**AT FEET FIRST PODIATRY, DR. MAGGIE SOLIMEO MAKES MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH PATIENTS WHO SEEK EXPERT RESOLUTION TO MEDICAL ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE FOOT AND ANKLE.**

by **MATT COSENTINO**  
photography by  
**JEFF ANDERSON**

relationships with her patients and by becoming a fixture in the community.

"A lot of times I find that medicine is becoming this large conglomerate of hospital systems, and as physicians that's not what we initially thought we were going to do," Dr. Solimeo says. "We didn't start off saying, 'I want to work for a hospital system.' We started off thinking we wanted to have our own office and see our own patients. That's why I went into medicine. What I found favorable with this practice was that it had a small-town feel and the doctor knew everyone in the family: the grandparents,

**F**rom a patient's perspective, navigating the complex world of health care in the 21st century is not always an easy task. Technology and research have led to significant advancements and better outcomes in many areas, yet the health networks that now dominate the landscape sometimes lack the personal touch patients crave when confronted with a challenging medical issue.

At Feet First Podiatry, the personal connection that many people desire will never be put on the backburner. In 2013, when Maggie Solimeo, DPM, first purchased the Lehigh Valley-based practice from its retiring founder, she was drawn to the intimate, cozy setting and the friendly approach of the staff. Not only has she carried that philosophy forward, but she has also taken it to new heights—both by building lasting

the parents, and the kids. This really appealed to me."

Dr. Solimeo has proven to be a perfect fit for Feet First Podiatry, where she provides a wide range of treatment options for problems of the foot and ankle. She has tripled the patient volume at the original location in Hellertown and last year opened a second office in Lansdale. A resident of nearby Harleysville, where she lives with her husband and two young children, Dr. Solimeo is well on her way to establishing the same patient-centric focus in Lansdale that thrives in Hellertown.

"I try to remember as many patients as I can," she says. "That's what drew me to the practice initially, and that's what I hope to bring to the Lansdale location. I want to know the members of the community where I live."

Dr. Solimeo, who is originally from New York, always knew she wanted to work in a science-related field in which she could help others. She was not immediately drawn to medicine while earning a degree in nutritional sciences from Cornell University. While completing a post-baccalaureate program at Harvard University,





Dr. Solimeo provides a wide range of treatment options for problems of the foot and ankle. Last year she opened a second office in Lansdale as a companion to the original in Hellertown.

she served as a medical assistant for an internal medicine doctor in a facility that housed several specialties. She met a podiatrist there who became a mentor.

"He allowed me to shadow him by going to the hospital to observe his surgeries and see patients with him in his office," she says. "He also explained how I could balance having a family with a career as a podiatrist. These factors motivated me to pursue podiatry. I went from Harvard to podiatry school at Temple University."

Surgical training at hospitals in Philadelphia and New York followed before Dr. Solimeo and her husband, Harry, settled near his hometown of Philadelphia. She started her career on the Main Line and then found Feet First Podiatry, where her easygoing nature and kindness have allowed her to get to the root of patients' problems.

"Everything is comprehensive," she says. "It starts with their mental state, what they're doing at home, how they're living. We need to know everything when we're evaluating somebody. It's not just pulling out the foot and seeing what's going on. ... We're not just looking at the injury and pushing them out the door in 10 minutes to get to another patient. That's not how I practice medicine. I need to know everything about the patient."

She learned this skill not at medical

school, but through years of practical experience. Treating patients as people and learning about them through the art of conversation builds trust between her and her patients. As a result, she finds she can deliver a more comprehensive level of care.

Many of her patients are baby boomers ages 65 and over who may have complications with their feet as a result of knee-replacement or hip-replacement surgery. Even so, she relishes the opportunity to treat people of any age, including children with in-grown toenails or painful plantar warts.

Dr. Solimeo, who is on the staff at four area hospitals, views surgery as a last resort, only to be considered after more conservative options have proven unsuccessful.

"It isn't uncommon for other podiatrists to focus on surgery or wound care, but our field offers flexibility so we can specialize in one or multiple areas of podiatry," she says. "I focus on conservative care first. If the initial treatment is not working only then do I talk about surgery, but surgery is definitely a commitment for both patient and physician. I always make sure my patients understand this."

In addition to the honesty and compassion that Dr. Solimeo brings to the practice, patients appreciate the friendly

staff that treats them warmly from the first phone call to the day they arrive for an in-person appointment. Many patients must return for regular checkups, so seeing the same smiling faces for each visit puts them at ease.

"I know there are a lot of bigger offices out there that have a large number of staff members, but I like to keep it small," Dr. Solimeo says. "I think it's more personal that way. Patients tell me they spoke to my receptionist, Carol, on the phone and they're grateful she got them in to see me. Or they'll say that my medical assistant, Roxann, was so nice when she took their blood pressure or temperature. They know my staff by name and feel connected to them."

She is excited about the opportunity to make more of those lasting connections at both offices. Feet First has certainly started off "on the right foot" in Lansdale.

"We're hoping word of mouth spreads," she says. "We want to have the same kind of impact in Lansdale, because it's a great community. We're excited to be here." ■



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