

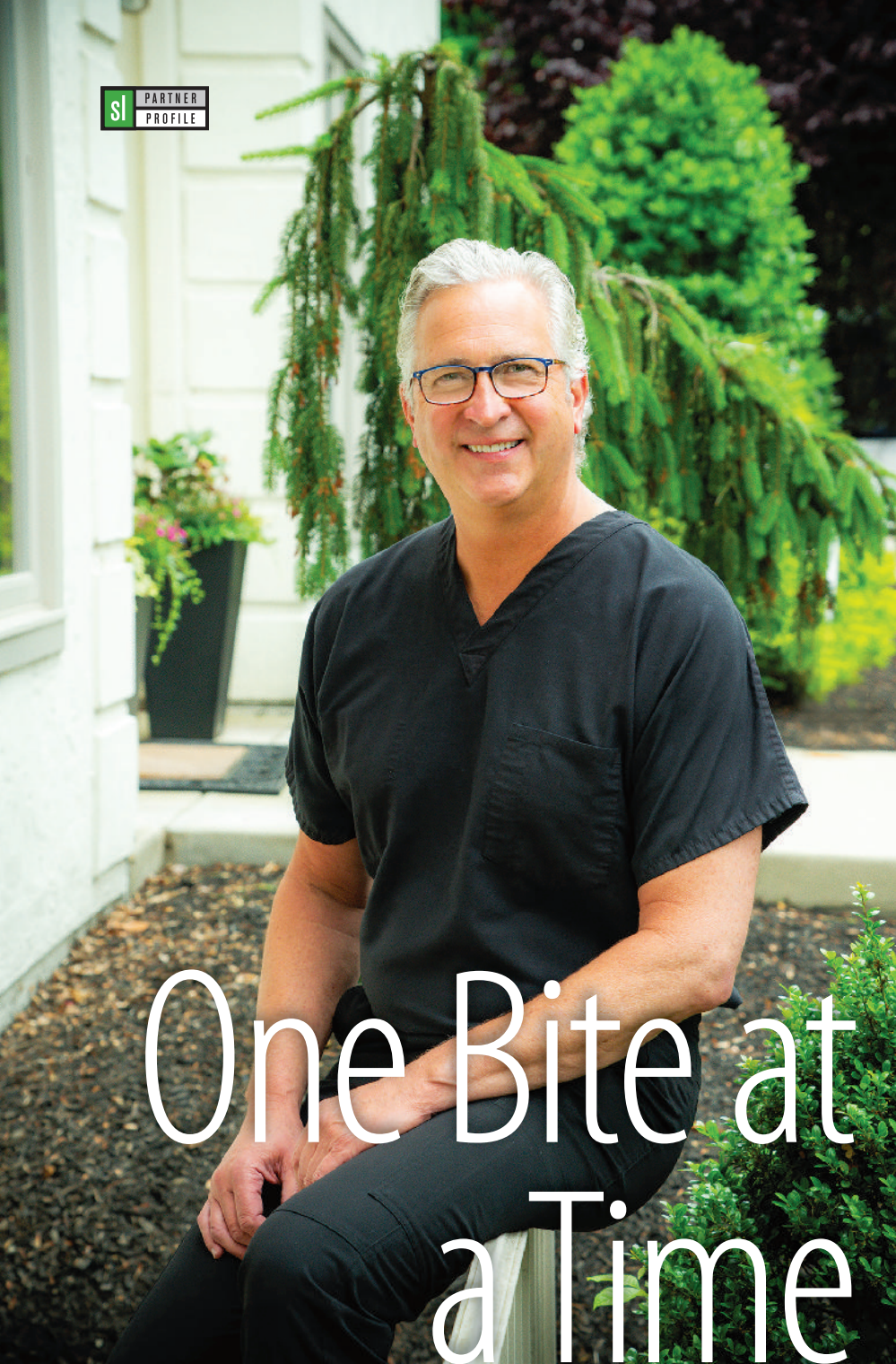
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cosmetic dentistry to
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One Bite at a Time

FROM NEXT-LEVEL
COSMETIC DENTISTRY TO
THE ALLEVIATION OF
STRESS-RELATED BRUXISM,
DR. PETER FLAHERTY
EXCELS AT RESTORING
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BY PHIL GIANFICARO
PHOTOS BY JODY ROBINSON

A young woman comes to see Peter Flaherty, D.M.D., founder of Devon-based Main Line Smile, mystified at her situation. She has been experiencing intense jaw pain and headaches. Some teeth have become chipped or broken, while others have become annoyingly sensitive. The patient does not recall biting on anything that would offer a plausible reason for her issues. She is at a loss.

Dr. Flaherty, however, is not. After all, he has seen it all before.

“What I’m seeing more and more these days is bruxism, or people grinding their teeth,” he says. “The increase is due entirely to the stress caused by COVID. I’m seeing more broken teeth and molars, sensitive teeth, and more TMJ (temporo-mandibular joint) pain—patients complaining their jaw hurts. It has affected the entire population.”

He’s not the only one to have witnessed this phenomenon. More than 70 percent of dentists surveyed nationwide have reported up to a 15 percent increase in patients who have experienced teeth grinding and clenching since the onset of the pandemic, according to the latest data from the American Dental Association.

To address bruxism, Dr. Flaherty fits patients with a mouthguard. Determining which type of appliance best matches up with the patient’s symptoms is critical to successful treatment.

“You just have to take the time and listen to what the patient is going through in order to figure out what needs to be done to help them,” he says. “I’ve always made nightguards for patients to address teeth grinding. But over the past couple years since COVID, I’ve made more and more. People often don’t realize they’re doing it. Stress is the cause.”

Alleviating patients’ concerns and, in many cases, giving them back their smile and the life they desire, has been the mission of Dr. Flaherty since he started practicing more than 30 years ago. He has witnessed and applied remarkable advancements in dentistry, whether in primary dental care or more involved procedures such as bridges, crowns, veneers, and teeth whitening. Patients also benefit from his extensive and intensive training in surgery for dental implants.

“There’s been a big uptick in cosmetics,” he notes. “Since COVID, people have had an opportunity to take stock in themselves. They’ve seen themselves on Zoom calls on their computers and maybe thought: *I’d like my teeth to be whiter, or I’d really like a nicer smile* and want a bridge or veneers. They’re valuing what’s best for them. They’re thinking: *Life is too short; take care of it now.*”

From Dr. Flaherty’s vantage point, the increasing use of technology has most rev-



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— Dr. Peter Flaherty,
Main Line Smile

olutionized dentistry in recent years. The digital revolution—digital imaging, 3D printing, and cone beam computed tomography, to name just a few—has vastly improved how dentists such as Dr. Flaherty orchestrate patients’ treatment plans.

“Before these developments, we’d have to take impressions in the patient’s mouth with dense and sticky alginate material,” he says. “Now, we have a camera on a handheld wand. We move it around and over the teeth to capture

images. The software stitches it all together to give us digitally accurate information. It’s a huge convenience for patients, and ultimately it contributes to a better clinical outcome.”

Calm and Comfortable

Dr. Flaherty has earned an impeccable reputation, regarded as one of the more sought-after dentists on the Main Line. He earned his doctorate at Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry at Temple University, which is ranked among the top 20 such schools in America. He remains in continuous contact with the academic community to provide patients with the latest therapeutic and cosmetic techniques. A member of the Academy of General Dentistry and the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, he has had examples of his cosmetic work published in some of the nation’s leading journals devoted to his profession.

He has seen innumerable cases in which a patient is embarrassed to smile, talk,

or laugh out loud because of how their teeth look. He takes satisfaction in helping his patients go from “a hard place” to “a good place,” as he puts it.

“Whatever needs to be done—cosmetic dentistry, teeth whitening, whatever—it not only gives them a better smile; it becomes life changing,” he adds. “To be part of that is a wonderful feeling. There’s that proverb: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. I tell them we’ll take it one bite at a time.

“Some people tell me I should just coast now, that I’ve been doing this for more than 30 years,” he continues. “But helping a patient, putting them at ease, explaining their situation, telling them we’ll get through it together, one step at a time—that’s what fuels me. It’s why I still love what I do.”

At Main Line Smile, patients are welcomed by a friendly and knowledgeable front office staff at a state-of-the-art facility. Scheduling is a priority; there is very little waiting before Dr. Flaherty will invite a patient to an examining room to begin assessing their issue. Patients are invited to wear AirPods or earphones to listen to music on their mobile devices while being treated.

“We even have massage units in our dental chairs,” Dr. Flaherty says. “It’s all about making the patient as calm and comfortable as possible. As we work on their teeth, we want to make sure we put them at ease.”

And, as he has been doing for 30-plus years, put a smile back on their face. ■



→ Main Line Smile

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