

# suburbanlife



Dr. LynAnn Mastaj, the founder of **Mastaj Orthodontics**, combines experience, excellence, and education to transform smiles and enrich patients' lives. page 54



**Also Inside:**

Five-star dentists, where to retire, and more



# Personal Touch

DR. LYNANN MASTAJ, THE FOUNDER OF **MASTAJ ORTHODONTICS**, COMBINES EXPERIENCE, EXCELLENCE, AND EDUCATION TO TRANSFORM SMILES AND ENRICH PATIENTS' LIVES.

BY BILL DONAHUE

Patients come to LynAnn Mastaj, D.M.D., primarily for her more than three decades of experience as a leader in orthodontic care. Each time a patient comes to her office and sits in her chair, however, they receive so much more than the building blocks of a picture-perfect smile.

Dr. Mastaj prides herself on her ability to get to know each patient—their orthodontic needs, of course, but also their interests and passions, their goals in life, their dreams for the future. She wants her patients to get to know her, too, and they quickly discover that her story goes much deeper than they anticipated.

In addition to her role as the leader of Bryn Mawr-based Mastaj Orthodontics, Dr. Mastaj is an educator, a world traveler, and an adventurer who has scaled some of the world's most challenging mountain peaks. She's an oenophile (wine lover) and an apiarist (beekeeper), as well as a gifted cook with ample culinary training. She's a devoted reader, a family woman, and an athlete who has excelled in sports such as skiing, golf, and tennis; she can even say she's a former NCAA tennis champion.

"Our practice is very patient-oriented, where I get to know patients and what's important to them," Dr. Mastaj says. "A lot of my personality and interests come out in the process. Patients get to know me as a real person; I might share a recipe or get into a conversation about hiking or travel, or I might share some of my artistic and adventurous side. My chief goal is to get great outcomes for my patients, but I want them to enjoy the journey, and I want to enjoy it, too."

In the process of perfecting someone's smile, doctor and patient often connect over a shared fondness for the outdoors. The list of mountains Dr. Mastaj has climbed is long and impressive, with notables such as Mount Fuji in Honshu, Japan; Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa; Mount Kosciuszko in New South Wales, Australia; and, a bit closer to home, Mount Washington in New Hampshire. She's also a frequent visitor to hiking trails within a few hours' drive of the Philadelphia area—namely, the Pinnacle in Hamburg and Mount Tammany on the east side of the Delaware Water Gap.

"I have loved the outdoors and being close to nature all my life," says Dr. Mastaj. "There's something so satisfying about reaching the top [of a mountain], being so close to nature. You don't have to go far from where we live to find some beautiful hiking trails and peaks, but I've loved hiking in the Presidential Range [in New Hampshire], in Colorado, and traveling to other places throughout the country."

Photos by Matt Hall and Nina Lea Photography



### Always Giving Back

Dr. Mastaj chose her career in part because she knew it would enable her to make a profound difference in the lives of others. She does so not only by creating healthy, beautiful smiles for patients of all ages, but also by supporting causes designed to uplift communities. For example, she has teamed with organizations that create academic and enrichment opportunities for students from lower-income families and, more recently, champion literacy for children and adults.

"Years ago, every kid who came into our office had a book in their hand," says Dr. Mastaj, who counts the late C.S. Lewis among her favorite authors. "Then kids started coming in with their Game Boys, and you didn't see anyone reading anymore. We can't lose that. People of all ages can gain so much from reading, so I've made promoting literacy a big part of what we do here. We want kids coming in and reading books, actively using their imagination and becoming critical thinkers, not just sitting there playing video games."

Dr. Mastaj leads her practice's efforts to raise money and donate books to organizations such as Mighty Writers, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit that every year teaches thousands of local children how to think clearly and write with clarity as a pathway to success. Also, about this time of year, she and her staff transform the Bryn Mawr office into a celebration of the magical universe created by another of her favorite authors, J.K. Rowling.

"I'm a huge Harry Potter fan," she says, adding that she has been unofficially sorted into Gryffindor House. "We dress up in character. We give away books. We do these amazing vignettes of scenes from the books and the movies; we even made

a Whomping Willow. People love it, and we tend to leave up the decorations until Thanksgiving."

The way she sees it, promoting literacy is an extension of her work as an educator. From teaching patients healthy habits to guiding the next generation of orthodontists, education has been foundational to her practice from the very beginning. Previously, Dr. Mastaj shared the wisdom of her experience through her work with the University of Pennsylvania Faculty Practice. She now directs accredited programs to provide continuing education to clinicians in various areas of specialty through S.M.A.R.T. Bio-medical, the firm founded by her husband, Ernesto Lee, D.M.D.

As she reflects on the scope of her 30-plus-year career, Dr. Mastaj considers herself blessed. Whether she is giving an adult a life-changing smile, mentoring a fellow clinician, or sparking a child's imagination by prompting them to read a new book, she cherishes the transformative nature of the practice she built.

"To succeed in this work, you have to enjoy helping people, and I certainly do," she says. "I love getting to know my patients and having them get to know me as a real person. Making these relationships with people is why I love going to work every day." ■

### → LynAnn Mastaj, D.M.D. Mastaj Orthodontics

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## Straight Talk About Aligners

In addition to traditional wire-and-bracket braces, Dr. Mastaj specializes in transforming patients' smiles through Invisalign; in fact, she has been an Invisalign Elite provider since 2006. She sees Invisalign as a dramatic step forward in orthodontic care, though she has seen too many unwanted patient outcomes resulting from the "copy-cat" providers that have sprung up in Invisalign's wake.

"A lot of these companies go for quick cosmetic fixes, focusing on the 'social six,' meaning the six front teeth everyone sees," she says. "They do this with little to no regard for the person's bite or existing decay or periodontal issues. When someone with existing conditions starts to wear these mail-order aligners and there's no one supervising their treatment, that's a recipe for disaster."

Dr. Mastaj often sees patients in her chair who come to her to resolve significant problems related to wearing mail-order aligners without appropriate supervision. She says people need to be educated about the risks of going the do-it-yourself route.

"You wouldn't cut your own hair, so why would you try to move your own teeth?" she says. "I have seen people have some horrible results because they put their trust in the wrong person or the wrong product. People think that in the long term, going the DIY route will be cheaper, but it's not. If they sought the expertise of a specialist, they would be far more likely to have a better result and far fewer complications."

"Orthodontics is more affordable than people think," she continues. "Most orthodontists allow patients to pay for supervised treatment through options like HSA accounts and payment plans. In my practice, we accept almost every insurance to make sure people have access to quality care supervised by an expert."