

suburban life



Also Inside:
Top dentists,
defying age,
and more

Best Dentist 4 Kids adds new clinicians and prepares to open a third location, rolling out the welcome mat for more patients in a safe, comfortable setting.

page 38



Growing Family

THE MOTHER-SON TEAM BEHIND **BEST DENTIST 4 KIDS** ADDS NEW CLINICIANS AND PREPARES TO OPEN A THIRD LOCATION, ROLLING OUT THE WELCOME MAT FOR MORE PATIENTS IN A SAFE, COMFORTABLE SETTING.

BY MATT COSENTINO | PHOTOS BY ALISON DUNLAP

Like many sons, Michael Koumaras, D.M.D., shares a special bond with his mother. What makes him different from most, however, is that he builds on that relationship every day at work. And he does so while doing a job that he learned from a young age was rife with the possibility of changing a child's life for the better, making a lasting impact, and finding personal fulfillment.

Dr. Koumaras and his mom, Lennie Checchio, D.D.S., are the team behind Best Dentist 4 Kids, a flourishing practice with locations in Philadelphia and Hatboro, and a third set to open this summer in Montgomeryville. One reason for the expansion is that Dr. Koumaras' sister, Dena O'Larnic, D.M.D., is currently in her pediatric dentistry residency at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. She will be coming on board in

2024, making it a true family business. "My mom always loved her job and preached about the pros to working with kids and going into dentistry," Dr. Koumaras says. "It stuck with both of us, and my other sister as well, who's a pediatric dentist in California. This is a stressful but exciting time for us as we open another office. We found a good fit, we love being in the suburbs, and we're looking forward to welcoming my sister to the practice."

Chana Eichen, D.M.D., will also soon be seeing patients as well, joining fellow associate Morgan Choe, D.M.D., and an orthodontist, Kerri C. Odhner, D.M.D., on the experienced and friendly staff.

No matter which office families visit, they can expect several advantages to their kids seeing a pediatric dentist compared to being treated at a general practice. Fam-

ilies can expect a world of difference, from the specialized training of the doctors to the complete understanding of children's growth and the calming demeanor of the entire staff.

"We have a lot more compassion for kids and we do the work better and faster, because we have two extra years of training on baby teeth primarily—and the anatomy is different between baby teeth and adult teeth," Dr. Koumaras says. "We're comfortable in every situation, and we know we can get treatment done without hurting the kids. I think the parents can sense that."

Children who once feared a trip to the dentist have no reason to be afraid. Best Dentist 4 Kids uses nitrous oxide to help them relax, if needed, and parents are allowed in the room during treatment. Each chair has a television above it and they can pick their favorite show, movie, or video to watch on Disney+, YouTube, or Netflix.

"We really make it a comfortable, family environment," Dr. Koumaras says. "A lot of my patients call me Uncle Mike because we become an extension of family. We



➔ **Best Dentist 4 Kids**
bestdentist4kids.com

461 N. Warminster Road
 Hatboro, PA 19040
 (215) 672-5437

9815 Roosevelt Blvd.
 Philadelphia, PA 19114
 (215) 333-9697

COMING SOON
 396 Doylestown Road
 Montgomeryville, PA 18936



just want it to be a comfortable environment for the kids so we cater to that.

“My favorite patient is a kid who had a bad experience at another dentist and they come in here nervous and/or crying,” he continues. “We let the parent come in and talk them through it and get the work done, and then they leave happy. We’re able to flip them into not being scared of the dentist anymore.”

The practice also incentivizes kids with fun groups such as the No Cavity Club, initiating them after a clean checkup and having them take a picture with a huge toothbrush. The doctors encourage their patients to keep up with their oral health, instilling good habits such as brushing twice a day and avoiding sugary foods, especially after dinner.

Best Dentist 4 Kids sees children of all ages, even infants, which has been a growing practice area of late. For babies who have tongue-tie or lip-tie—which can affect eating and speech, and cause pain for mothers who are breastfeeding—Dr.

Koumaras can perform a laser frenectomy procedure to correct the problem.

“If they’re having any issues with pain when they’re nursing, they’re gassy or they’re colicky, I would say 90 percent of the time it’s because there’s a structural issue in the mouth that is not allowing them to feed properly,” he explains. “I’ve noticed a ton of babies are having issues and the parents don’t have very good guidance, even from pediatricians, who are missing a lot of tongue- and lip-ties. These procedures release the lip or tongue, help them feed better, and they become less cranky.”

The procedure is safe, and results in very little discomfort; some babies even sleep through it. Dr. Koumaras uses a laser, which tends to be gentler on the tissue and offers no risk of infection. It also requires no local anesthesia or stitches.

Having that kind of influence on a child’s life is the reason Dr. Koumaras followed his mother into the field. Dr. Checchio

herself became interested in dentistry because of her father, the late Anthony L. Checchio, D.D.S., an oral and maxillofacial surgeon from Philadelphia who was involved in the leadership of several national organizations during his career.

Dr. Koumaras jokes that he will try to coax his daughters, Adrianna and Ava, into the family business someday. They will have plenty of role models to look up to, including their grandmother, who may very well be part of the practice when they’re ready to join.

“She’s never going to retire,” Dr. Koumaras says of his mom. “She loves coming to work and seeing the kids, because she feels like it’s her purpose. It’s really her identity.” ■