

# suburbanlife

*Kylie Kelce*  
**TAKES THE  
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Renowned periodontists  
**Drs. Scott K. Smith** and  
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practices to enhance their  
ability to provide patients  
with compassionate,  
personalized care.

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# Strength in Numbers

Renowned periodontists **Drs. Scott K. Smith** and **Peter Susanin** merge their practices to enhance their ability to provide patients with compassionate, personalized care. **BY MATT COSENTINO | PHOTOS BY ALISON DUNLAP**

**W**hen professionals in any industry pass the three-decade mark in their careers, there is the danger of complacency setting in and affecting their work on a daily basis. For health care providers, the threat is even more magnified, as any misstep can impact the well-being of the people who depend on them.

That's hardly a concern for patients of Scott K. Smith, D.D.S., who still brings the same passion for his profession that he had the day he started. He's well known for his commitment to providing personalized care, giving back to the community, and educating others in the field. Peter Susanin, D.D.S., is cut from the same cloth, which makes the merging of their flourishing periodontal practices a perfect marriage.

"We've known each other for over 30 years," Dr. Smith says. "The stars aligned, we started talking, and we decided it would be great if we worked together. It's exciting and it has rejuvenated both of us."

Dr. Susanin was inspired on several levels to join forces and continue the stellar reputation that both practices have under the same roof. Not only will they share their expertise with each other, but they will also have opportunities to collaborate when needed.

"This office gives me the feeling of being home," he says. "The technology here is exemplary, and it was something I thought my patients would want to take advantage of. It seemed like the right time





With Drs. Smith and Susanin and Office Manager Rebecca Smith at the helm, the practice has become known as a paragon of leadership, efficiency, and professionalism.

to merge things because our philosophies are so similar. When you're closely aligned, the quality of care goes up."

Rebecca Smith, Dr. Smith's wife, rounds out the power trio. She took over as office manager about a year ago and completely revamped the systems and processes of the practice. Doing so led to increased efficiency internally and a patient base that is informed throughout every step of their treatment.

"That's what stood out to me," Dr. Susanin says. "I've been in and out of so many offices and there was always a disconnect. I just felt a sense of leadership, organization, and professionalism here, along with extreme kindness, thoughtfulness, and humor. It created such an unusual, unexpected vibe that really struck me as unique and was something that I wanted to be a part of. Rebecca had a lot to do with that."

As periodontists, Drs. Smith and Susanin treat diseases that affect the gums and can potentially destroy the support of natural teeth. Rebecca Smith likens it to being in charge of the foundation of a house: "If you don't have a strong foundation, you're not going to have a lasting product. So you want to be in the best hands to make sure the foundation is solid. That's what we do here."

The shared practice has a multispecialty approach centered on complex surgical procedures and a sophisticated dental hygiene maintenance program. The doctors do everything possible to preserve a patient's natural teeth, but when necessary the team is extraordinarily skilled at dental implants and can also perform advanced techniques such as bone augmentation and soft-tissue

grafting. There are plenty of options for facial aesthetics as well, from laser therapy to dermal fillers.

Unlike many specialists, the practice accept insurance and participates with the PPOs of many leading carriers.

"As periodontists, we deal with disease such as bone loss and the potential loss of teeth," Dr. Smith says. "In addition to disease, we're very involved with improving the patient's mouth. For example, if they have a gingival or gummy smile, we can help. We often have people crying in our office when they have that procedure, because they're just so happy that their smile is improved."

Ninety percent of patients are referred by their general dentists, and Drs. Smith and Susanin keep patients' primary practitioners in the loop with constant communication. They see their role as complementing the dentist and acting as a team to ensure the best possible care.

They also welcome patients to take an active role in their respective treatment plans.

"It all starts with listening to patients and finding out what their goals are, and seeing how we can meet their goals," Rebecca says.

Dr. Susanin adds, "It's really about customizing their treatment based on their specific needs at that time."

The practice may be known for going above and beyond for patients, but its commitment to helping others and raising the bar in dentistry goes even further. Dr. Smith continues to serve as the lead clinical instructor for AIC Education Center, an international dental implant education group.

In addition, he regularly welcomes dentists and dental students into his operatories on the weekends to share his wisdom gleaned from 30 years as a periodontist.

"Giving back is very important to us," he says. "We have courses where general dentists come in and we do surgical training with them, including complex surgical techniques."

At the end of the day, Drs. Smith and Susan agree that the greatest reward comes from delivering compassionate, personal care to influence a patient's life for the better. As Rebecca Smith notes, the positive feedback they receive makes the entire team proud.

"If you read our reviews on Google," she says, "you'll see that the one thing that is reiterated over and over again is how friendly everybody is, how patient the doctors are, how much time they spend with each patient, and how at ease everybody feels in coming here. We work really hard at that."

"Patient care comes first," she continues. "We're definitely cutting edge and our reputation is excellent, but what also makes us so special is that patients get the best medical care while being handled with dignity." ■



**Scott K. Smith, D.D.S.**  
**Peter Susanin, D.D.S.**

357 S. Gulph Road, Suite 250  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
(610) 265-7023  
[drsksmith.com](http://drsksmith.com)