



FAMILY VALUES

Shaped by three generations of the Howarth family, **Wallingford Station Family Dental** provides the personalized, gentle care each patient deserves.

by PHIL GIANFICARO photography by JEFF ANDERSON

Sometimes, the most meaningful and cherished gifts one receives are delivered long after the initial celebration has ended.

Early into his career, Stephen P. Howarth Sr., D.M.D., of Wallingford Station Family Dental, in Delaware County, never fully intended to follow in the footsteps of his father, Willard, a dentist. The one thing the younger Howarth did know about his future career is that it he wanted to work with his hands.

After Howarth received a B.S. in finance from Pennsylvania State University, he put his hands to good use. First, he rebuilt player pianos for a few years. Later, after injuring his back while moving one of those pianos, he considered a career building model ships at the Independence Seaport Museum on the waterfront in Philadelphia.

Each time he would inform his father of his latest career choice, the elder Howarth, a man of infinite wisdom and patience, would respond, “Uh-huh.” When the younger Howarth finally decided to follow in his father’s footsteps by attending the University of

Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, his father offered a similar response: “Uh-huh.”

Not until years later, long after he joined his father’s practice, and after his father’s retirement seven years later, did he learn of the man’s true feelings.

“People of Dad’s generation didn’t express their feelings outwardly,” Dr. Howarth says. “He never told me how he felt about me becoming a dentist like him. It was only when he retired, and his patients became my patients, did I find out. They would tell me how he’d tell them all the time just how

proud he was of me, how honored he was for me to have followed in his footsteps. Hearing that meant the world to me. That has stayed with me.”

That’s not all Dr. Howarth inherited from his father. He also learned the importance of dedication to his craft, an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of patients, and the importance of treating patients as if they were members of the family, not merely customers in an examination chair.

“Dad always stressed to me you’re not just treating a person’s teeth, that there’s a person attached to those teeth, and a family attached to them,” Dr. Howarth recalls. “He told me that if you do the right things, take care of your patients fairly and to the best of your ability, and do right by them, they’ll do right by you. I’ve never forgotten that. They’re the lessons I passed on to my son (Stephen Jr.), who followed in my footsteps and practices with me today.”

Dr. Howarth has used those lessons as the foundation of Wallingford Station Family Dental. Whether doing a simple dental cleaning or performing a more involved procedure, such as restorative dentistry or the treatment of periodontal disease, the knowledgeable and courteous staff is committed to providing the personalized, gentle care each patient deserves.

Finishing Touches

Wallingford Station Family Dental, whose name ties back to Dr. Howarth’s fascination with model trains, offers a comprehensive raft of dental services. This includes everything from traditional cleanings and preventative care, to porcelain crowns, bridges, and veneers, as well as full and partial dentures, composite fillings, and teeth whitening and dental implants.

But it is the finishing touch—the genuine personal connection between dentist and patient that Dr. Howarth’s father impressed upon him—that can make all the difference.

“I had a patient many years ago who wasn’t happy with her existing veneers on her front teeth,” Dr. Howarth says. “She came to me and wanted to change them because she didn’t like the shape and wanted them to look more feminine.”

So he did what his father taught him: He took the time to listen to the patient and care about her needs as a person.

“After I laid the new veneers on her teeth, I held a mirror to her face,” he continues. “She burst into tears and told me it was the most beautiful thing anyone has ever done for her. She



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was like other patients who’ve become frustrated because no one seemed to address their concerns. I find if you just let a patient in that situation speak openly and you just sit there and listen, you learn what they really want.”

A native of Delaware County, Dr. Howarth’s background includes 10 years of teaching Preclinical and Clinical Dentistry at the University of Pennsylvania where he became one of six clinical group leaders. Additionally, he taught physiology for two years at Penn State all while maintaining a full-time clinical practice. Currently, he is a member in good standing of the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Dental Association, the Pennsylvania Dental Association, and the Delaware/Chester County Dental Association.

“The thing I take the most pride in, and I think the same goes for my father and my son, is that we take pride in ethics and honesty in the practice,” Dr. Howarth says. “It is among the things that have defined my career.”

While Dr. Howarth was not certain he wanted to pursue a career in dentistry until later, his son was a different story; Stephen Jr. knew early on he wanted to become a dentist.

“But he never told me, only told his mother and sisters,” Dr. Howarth says. “His personality is in many ways similar to mine. Like my father and me, he has the same degree of caring for the patients.”

In fact, the three generations of Howarths have much in common. Each is a graduate of Penn Dental Medicine, for example. Yet the connection among the three goes a step further.

Penn has a tradition, in which an alumnus is given the honor of presenting their child with his or her diploma. When Dr. Stephen Sr. did the honors for his son, he was bursting with pride. And when Dr. Stephen Sr. received his diploma from Dr. Willard, he could tell that his father felt the same way.

In other words, like father, like son. ■

Dr. Stephen P. Howarth Sr. (left)
and Dr. Stephen P. Howarth Jr.

