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# FAMILY MATTERS

After nearly 40 years of practice, an iconic Dyker Heights DMD welcomed his son to the family business. Here's to a new generation of broader smiles

BY JESSICA JONES-GORMAN • PHOTOS BY VINNIE AMESSE

**When Dr. William Bongiorno was** studying biology at Seton Hall University, he became enamored with the medical science of dentistry and decided to make a career out of caring for smiles.

"I liked the science of dentistry and the artistry behind it," he explained. "And the aspect of helping people was the biggest bonus. It's a wonderful thing to see someone smile after completing a cosmetic case."

A Bay Ridge/Dyker Heights fixture since 1973—when he opened his first general dentistry location after graduating from New York University College of Dentistry—Bongiorno is now on the cusp of his fifth decade of practice.

"My first office was on 74th and 19th—I guess I gravitated to the area because it's where I grew up," he said. Bongiorno changed locations within the neighborhood a few years later, however, before settling in his current location on 72nd and 13th nearly four years ago.

"I've been doing this a long time, so I've literally seen families grow and change right here in my office," Bongiorno smiled. "Young kids who sat in my chair when they were five now have families of their own and I'm treating their kids, too. It's nice to

see families stay with us for that amount of time, and is definitely the best part of serving the same community for so long."

In addition to maintaining his practice, Bongiorno has lectured both nationally and locally and is currently a clinical assistant professor of cariology (the study of dental caries, also known as tooth decay or cavities) and comprehensive care at NYU College of Dentistry, where he has been teaching for the past ten years. He is also president of the Bay Ridge Dental Society, serves on the board of directors of the NYU College of Dentistry, and is vice president of the school's Alumni Association.

His already family-focused practice became even more tightly-knit when his son Robert joined the team in 2010.

"Growing up, watching my father practice dentistry, I was certainly encouraged and inspired to go into this field," Dr. Robert Bongiorno said. "Being around him and in the office so much allowed me to have this close-up view of dentistry and all of the different aspects involved, so this was a very natural career choice for me."

After earning a BA in biology from Scanton University, Robert Bongiorno graduated from NYU in 2009 with a doctor of den-

## AROUND TOWN



tal surgery degree (DDS). He pursued a master's in medical microbiology at Long Island University, and completed a one-year resident program at Staten Island University Hospital in June 2010.

Together with his father, Robert Bongiorno practices general dentistry, and over the past few years has been focusing on cosmetic procedures.

"This is a full-service practice and we offer everything from implants to Invisalign," Bongiorno the younger said, adding that one of the more innovative procedures he focuses on is the "same day" implant.

"In some cases, a patient is a candidate for immediate implants," he explained. "The way implants work is that

they are placed [in the jaw], then integrated for usually three to six months before we are able to load [the crown]. But with immediate loading, if the bone is healthy, we can do surgical placement all within the same day. For many patients, this is a unique and very viable option."

"My father has 40 years of experience and I add some new and innovative technologies, bringing our patients the best of both worlds," Bongiorno added. "We both stay up to date, constantly renewing our credits, but my father's experience is something you *cannot* glean from a textbook."

Robert Bongiorno also currently works at a multi-specialty practice in Queens, and explained that in the

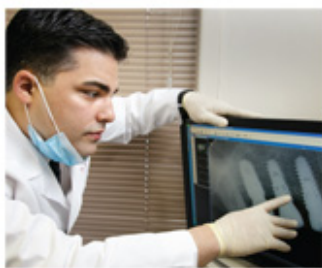


future, he hopes to open a few more practices, possibly gathering several specialists under one roof.

Community outreach is also one of his top priorities.

"There are a lot of under-serviced communities that do not have a place to go for much-needed dental work," Bongiorno pointed out. "They're essentially left behind...not taken care of. But there are outreach programs that help care for those people, and that's what my father and I are getting involved with."

In fact, this year, William Bongiorno will participate in an New York University-sponsored outreach program to help children in Nepal.



**Dr. William  
and Dr. Robert Bongiorno**  
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"NYU has a lot of very wonderful programs," he said. "Outreach like this allows us to help people from all over the world."

"The profession itself is changing tremendously now," William Bongiorno concluded. "The profession in general has become much more caring and compassionate. There's a lot more community service, mentoring, and treatment planning. And for me, that's what dentistry is all about." •

*Simon G.*



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