

DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS

**Dr. Jeffrey
Foltz**



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contents

VOL. 4, NO. 1

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3
Methicillin-Resistant
Staphylococcus Aureus

4 COVER STORY
DR. JEFFREY FOLTZ

10 FEATURE
NEUROMUSCULAR
DENTISTRY: PROGRESS IS
SLOW BUT STEADY

For a hands-on approach, *Doctor of Dentistry* will examine the diagnosis and management of disorders that result from misalignment of the jaw.

16
Dental Associate Contracts

DEPARTMENTS

2 from the publisher

9 current topics

14 news



PHOTO BY HAIGWOOD STUDIOS

ON THE COVER

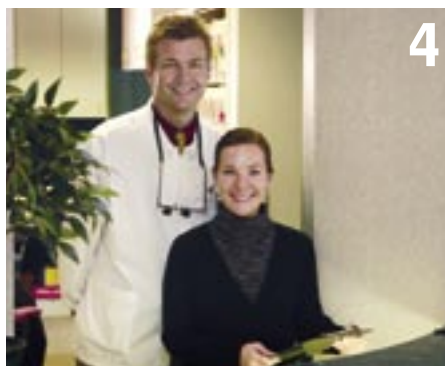
Dr. Foltz plays golf and tennis — sports interests he shares with his son, Porter. Claire Foltz says, “Porter is just Jeff’s buddy. Seeing them together melts your heart.”



10



10



4



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Dr. Jeffrey Foltz

By Susan Illis

Dr. Jeffrey Foltz quotes an old saying in dentistry when he says that a dentist's practice really represents the dentist as a person. And he exemplifies the adage. He carries the personalized, whole-body, spiritual approach he offers to his patients into all other aspects of his life. The services that he offers in his dental practice may focus primarily, but not exclusively, on a patient's oral health, but outside dentistry, Dr. Foltz gives back to the community — local, international and within the profession — by serving as a mentor, disciple and missionary. Dr. Foltz summarizes his philosophy: "Each of our practices, as a dentist, reflects who we are. I think the fact that mine is based in my community, and it's very personalized shows what's important to me. We take a lot of time with people. Those are the elements that you'll see in other parts of my life as well."

"One of the things I really wanted to do, that really motivated me to become a dentist, was having a community-based practice."



PHOTOS BY HAIGWOOD STUDIOS



Dr. Foltz's practice is reminiscent of an earlier era, with his office assistant, Melissa Moyer, greeting the staff and providing individualized service to his patients, who are the people he interacts with every day, whether at the office, at the store or on the baseball field.

Having grown up in Chamblee, Dr. Foltz has practiced in Peachtree Corners for more than 20 years. His practice includes not just people he has known their entire lives, but those who have known him most of his life. "It goes both ways," he says. "I have patients who were 3 years old when I started my practice, and now they're married and their kids are my patients." Among his patients are his elementary school principal, elementary school physical education teacher and the physician who put stitches in his knee when he was 9.

"One of the things I really wanted to do, that really motivated me to become a dentist, was having a community-based practice," Dr. Foltz says, and community is an important theme in his life. Providing service to his community is one of the things that initially drew him to dentistry, when he was about 12 years



So ill and fragile when she arrived, that she looked more like a 6-year-old than the 12-year-old that she was. Clauna was unable to walk across a room without getting winded and needing to rest. Dr. Foltz offers this evocative description, “She was so frail and so thin, you could just see her little heart pumping through her chest. When she arrived she spoke no English but during her six-month stay, she became fluent and well versed in local customs.

old. “At age 12 or 13, what really alerted to me the whole thing was being my own boss and having a practice that’s community based and helping people and being of service. Those are things that appealed to me — the independence, the service nature and the health care part of it as well. Of course, back in those days, every dentist was an independent entity. There was no such thing as managed care.”

With a career goal in mind, he prepared as early as high school for a future in dentistry. “I was resolute. At that age, it just gave me a chance to focus in on something. My parents were very encouraging.” He laughs, “I got into high school and I said, ‘What do I need to go to dental school?’ and the counselor said, ‘Well, you need to go to college first.’

“I was very focused and I mapped out a plan,” Dr. Foltz says, and that plan took him to the University of Georgia, where, surprisingly, he majored in zoology. Knowing that he would have to take a lot of biology, life sciences and mathematics courses regardless, and because he had always liked animals, he decided to add some diversity to his education with a focus on zoology.

“I was the only person not pursuing a career in wildlife management or forestry to major in zoology. I did a lot of dissections and went on a field trip to Sapelo Island.”

That early field trip was good preparation for future overseas mission trips Dr. Foltz would take, providing dental services to remote regions in Venezuela and Jamaica. On his first mission trip, Dr. Foltz was part of a health care group containing physicians, optometrists and dentists. The volunteers facilitated dramatic changes for the people. The optometrists took old eyeglasses and corrected the prescription on site, giving people the gift of sight. “It was amazing,” Dr. Foltz enthuses.

Some areas were so remote that a double translation from English to Spanish to the local Indian language was required. Dr. Foltz mostly performed extractions, providing immediate pain relief and improved quality of life to the people. “There’s nothing worse than a toothache. When you have a toothache, it commands your full attention. To be able to get people out of pain — they were very grateful.”

The success of that trip encouraged him to plan another mission trip. “That was very fulfilling, very rewarding. That trip made such an impact on us that we went back to our Sunday school class at church and said ‘We can do this.’” This time, Dr. Foltz was the only medical professional among a group of young married couples, including some pregnant women. They traveled to a poor, remote area of Jamaica, where most of the volunteers worked on a construction project, building an addition to the local church. While the others built a church, Dr. Foltz, with the help of a few assistants, extracted teeth.

His daughter, Callie, now 13, is continuing the family tradition of international service. A few years ago, she approached her parents about hosting a medically fragile child seeking medical treatment in Atlanta. Dr. Foltz and his wife, Claire, urged Callie to seriously consider the responsibilities entailed, and encouraged

While she faced a surgery that had a high percentage of failure, her story was a success. She is now a happy little girl, able to walk to and attend school for the first time in her life.



PHOTOS BY DR. FOLTZ



“One of the things that I really wanted to do, that really motivated me to become a dentist, was to have a community-based practice where I live, to see my patients in the grocery store, to coach their kids in Little League.

her to pray about it. After a short interlude, Callie assured her parents she had prayed, and “God’s telling me that’s what we need to be doing.” Callie not only initiated the project, she did most of the research and legwork to complete the paperwork.

As a result, the Foltz family agreed to be a back-up host family for Childspring International, the same organization that brought Baby Noor to Atlanta from Iraq. However, the weekend before the child, Clauna, was due to arrive from Haiti, the primary host family received the devastating news that the wife had been diagnosed with cancer.

With the original host family facing medical challenges of their own, the Foltzes stepped up to the plate, especially young Callie. Dr. Foltz describes his daughter’s role in caring for the Clauna. “We didn’t speak any Creole, but Callie really persevered. She took it upon herself to care for Clauna. So Clauna slept in her bed and Callie bathed her and dressed her. Clauna really was very dependent on Callie for everything.”

So ill and fragile when she arrived that

she looked more like a 6-year-old than the 12-year-old that she was, Clauna was unable to walk across a room without getting winded and needing to rest. Dr. Foltz offers this evocative description: “She was so frail and so thin, you could just see her little heart pumping through her chest. It was just like E.T., if you remember what E.T. looked like in the film, in terms of her torso and how she presented herself.” When she arrived she spoke no English but during her six-month stay, she became fluent and well versed in local customs. During the course of her stay, Clauna also became so close to the Foltzes’ son, Porter (12), that the two bickered like sister and brother.

While she faced a surgery that had a high percentage of failure, her story was a success. She is now a happy little girl, able to walk to and attend school for the first time in her life. “She couldn’t walk, so she couldn’t go to school,” Dr. Foltz explains. The family receives an update from her every three months. “She lives in such a remote area, she has no contact unless Childspring representatives physically go down there and visit her.” In recent photographs, Clauna looks like a normal, healthy girl — a true reward for the Foltzes’ efforts. “She has color and she’s so full of life.”

But his involvement in international volunteerism has not lessened Dr. Foltz’s commitment to his community, both in Atlanta and in the dentistry profession. His Peachtree Corners practice is located just a few miles from his home and in the area where he grew up, enabling Dr. Foltz to provide the personalized, local practice that he envisioned from a very young age. During his 20 years of dentistry he has seen the area change dramatically, while still retaining some of the original essence. He has witnessed

He comments, “You have to take yourself wherever you go in this life, to be congruent.” Together with his wife, Claire, Dr. Foltz offers premarital counseling to engaged couples. After 18 years of marriage and with two adolescent children, Callie and Porter, the Foltzes can certainly lead by example. Left to right: daughter Callie, son Porter, Daisy Jane, Dr. Foltz and wife Claire.



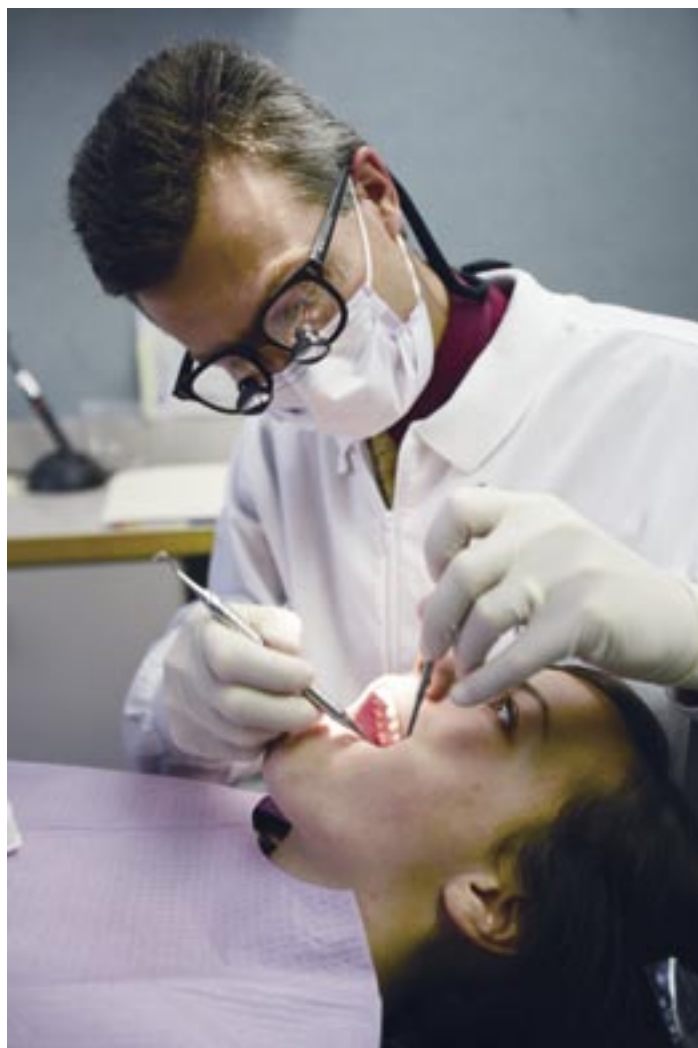
the area around Chamblee High School, his alma mater, transition from ordinary middle-class suburbia to a multiethnic area and, now, as gentrification takes hold, the modest bungalows sit alongside huge new homes.

Dr. Foltz's practice is reminiscent of an earlier era, with his staff providing individualized service to his patients, who are the people he interacts with every day, whether at the office, at the store or on the baseball field. "One of the things that I really wanted to do, that really motivated me to become a dentist, was to have a community-based practice where I live, to see my patients in the grocery store, to coach their kids in little league. That's been a real blessing for me." Dr. Foltz has lived his dream by coaching Porter's baseball team for three seasons, including a championship year. As a Sunday school teacher for Porter's class for six years, Dr. Foltz guided one group of boys from kindergarten through elementary school. "Some of the boys on the Little League team and Sunday school class are patients," Claire Foltz explains. "Jeff loves that."

A member of the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, the Georgia Dental Association and the Hinman Dental Society, Dr. Foltz keeps abreast of new developments through continuing education opportunities. He is also involved with the Schuster Center for Professional Development, based in Scottsdale, AZ. Dr. Michael Schuster, who founded the center in 1978, advocates building a personalized practice without the interference of third parties. The center proposes a new model that creates a practice that is fulfilling, but still profitable, resulting in changes in the quality of practice as well as a dentist's quality of life.

Dr. Foltz describes the Schuster Center's philosophy: "It

Here, Dr. Foltz and new patient Louise review her treatment choices. He discusses her dental health as to where she is currently. "We encourage our patients to take baby steps, just one step at a time, and as long as they're making progress, that's fine."



PHOTOS BY HAIGWOOD STUDIOS

Dr. Foltz works on long time patient Nicole Morrison. He sees himself and his staff as facilitators, who help their patients move toward their goals.

teaches dentists the things I hold near and dear — private care practice, fee for service dentistry, patient-centered dentistry, health-centered dentistry. It emphasizes those principles and in this day and age of managed care, and in this day and age where hustle and bustle, high production and high volume seem to be the mantras of our dental culture, it reminds us there's an alternative. You can take a step back and really spend time with people and really help educate them and look at the cause of disease rather than just treating the symptoms, really treat someone fully rather than a bunch of people partially. If that's for you, it can be very rewarding."

Consistent with his dedication to giving back and helping others, he serves as a mentor of the Schuster Center. He guides eight dentists from around the

country, from California to Texas to New Hampshire, meeting with them in Scottsdale three times a year. “They have goals they’ve identified,” Dr. Foltz says. “Not just technical issues, not just dentistry related, although they can be. I’m more of a performance coach to see how we can be more of the person we want to be — in terms of our relationships, in terms of our health, in terms of our profession, in terms of our family, in terms of our recreation — all those kinds of things. We identify goals and have phone calls twice a month. I facilitate those calls and coach each of the dentists on these goals. Sometimes I ask them the really tough questions, and sometimes it’s a matter of being the encourager, helping people move toward their goals.”

Dr. Foltz also serves the local community by being a mentor, or in Christian terms, a disciple. He meets individually with five men anywhere from weekly to every three weeks, to discuss their progress toward their spiritual goal of being a man after God’s own heart. Dr. Foltz adds, “And of course, that spills over, too, to being a husband after God’s own heart, being a father after God’s own heart, being a boss after God’s own heart, being a professional person after God’s own heart. It’s those same principles.”

He comments, “You have to take yourself wherever you go in this life, to be congruent.” Together with his wife, Dr. Foltz

offers premarital counseling to engaged couples. After 18 years of marriage and with two adolescent children, the Foltzes can certainly lead by example. In his free time, Dr. Foltz plays golf and tennis, sports interests he shares with his son, Porter. Claire says, “Porter is just Jeff’s buddy. Seeing them together melts your heart.”

Dr. Foltz sums up his whole-body approach to a personalized dentist practice. “We’re like the Weight Watchers of dentistry. We’re just very encouraging. We measure dental health as where they are currently and where the patient might want to be, in terms of how healthy they might want to be. We encourage them to take baby steps, just one step at a time, and as long as they’re making progress, that’s fine.”

He sees himself and his staff as facilitators, who help their patients move toward their goals. Stressing the oral-systemic connection and the importance of maintaining good dental health in order to avoid life-threatening illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes, they take the time to educate their patients. “The stakes are a lot higher than we knew in the past, so I think that to be able to help somebody see the difference they can make in their oral health and how it can impact their overall health is important. It’s a quality of life issue and I find that very rewarding.”

Emphasizing the need to address the causes of dental problems rather than continually treating the symptoms, Dr. Foltz says, “It’s really very, very satisfying to see people who have been going to dentists all their lives — 30, 40 years — and now they find themselves with a bunch of fillings in their mouth, their gums have always bled when they flossed and they think those are just the facts of life that are always going to be with them. To help them fully understand what causes that and to really take the time to help them see that there are some very low-cost, very easy things to do that can make a huge impact on their health from a dental standpoint.”

Dr. Foltz offers a series of articles, available on his website (www.drjefffoltz.com) on topics addressing the importance of flossing, sealants, mouth changes during pregnancy and many other topics. These brief and readable treatises provide patients with easily understood strategies for improving and maintaining dental and overall health.

Having fulfilled his lifelong goal of building a community-based dental practice, Dr. Foltz carries that level of personalized service to other aspects of his life, acting as a mentor and Christian disciple. “That’s what drives me. That’s really what gets me going. I enjoy dentistry. I enjoy the technical part of it and it’s great to change people’s smiles — I love that. But what really gets me excited is to see the progress somebody’s making towards their goals — whether spiritually, emotionally or physically. I feel like I’m making a difference in somebody’s life.” ■

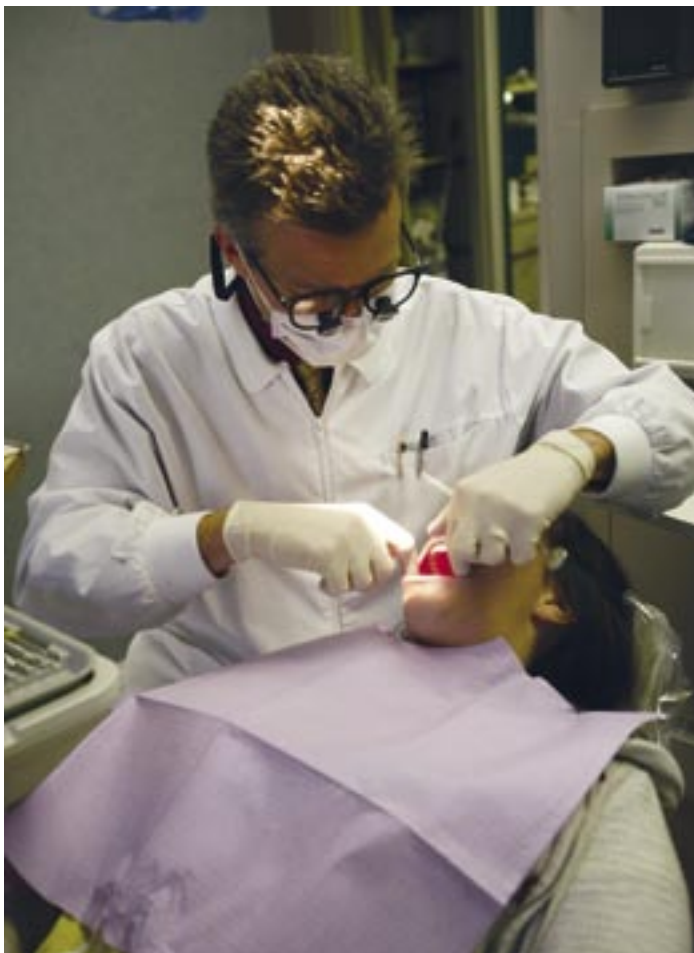


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