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Dentist serves area for quarter century

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY — Dr. James Strawn of the Midway Dental Center has lived in Florida most of his life. His parents, both Florida natives, moved back to the state when he was 7. He attended dental school at Virginia Commonwealth University because Florida did not have a dental school. After serving as a dentist in the Air Force for two years, he returned to Florida to open a practice.

“As a youngster, Okeechobee was the first place we lived,” he said. “We came to Fort Pierce to shop and fish. I had fond memories. When I came down to take the Florida (Dental) Boards, Fort Pierce was one of the first places I looked into. I decided it was the perfect place. It was a smaller town, on the coast, in the southern half of the state.”

Dr. Strawn opened his practice 25 years ago.

“I started from scratch,” he said. “There were about a dozen or so dentists in the area. They were friendly and welcomed me. They felt they could use the help. Some referred patients to me and away we went.”

Dr. Strawn noted that while fillings and extractions are still part of dentistry, the field has evolved.

“We educated people on the importance of preventive care, of fluoride and regular check-ups,” he said. “We now have the luxury of having time to take care of other emergencies and repair work. There has been an advancement in dental materials and we’re not dependent on gold and silver. We have high-tech tooth-colored materials and porcelains. The materials are much more aesthetic. The result is that we are able to use porcelain on the front teeth and make them look brand new, removing color defects and defects



Photo courtesy of Dr. James Strawn

Dr. Strawn and his team at Midway Dental Center in Fort Pierce.

in size and shape.”

The dentist noted that braces have also improved.

“The clear braces are perfect for adults,” he said. “They’re convenient. You can take them out to eat and brush teeth. They may have had braces as a kid and there may now be crowding or spacing. We get them back to where they look perfect.”

Strawn said that aging affects teeth as it affects other parts of the body.

“As we get older, teeth wear and get stained and yellow,” he said. “Using a porcelain cover strengthens the teeth and gives them a brand new appearance. It can be a life-changer, getting a straighter, whiter smile so they feel good when they’re out with friends or at work. Remaking a smile is the most satisfying part of my practice.”

Dentures have also changed and improved the quality of life for those who need them.

“There are mini-implants that are like pegs that attach to the lower jaw, which is the most troublesome,” he said. “Many with lower dentures are limited because they’re unstable in the mouth. We do the mini-implant and they get a whole new level of function and comfort. They come back a month or two later and say, ‘Wow, I can eat what I want to.’ Being able to enjoy a meal is one of the pleasures of life. You can go out to dinner without embarrassment.”

Dr. Strawn said that his practice emphasizes a friendly touch.

“I’ve been in one area my whole practice career,” he said. “I’m treating the kids and grandkids of people we started with way back. It’s rewarding to be in that relationship. We always welcome new patients. It’s a warm, family atmosphere. We’re all good friends and there’s a nice team spirit that makes

people more relaxed. They feel the warmth and caring. That is often missing in the health care field. It’s become more of an industry. You get to know them. You’re there for the long run.

“Many patients come in with anxieties about dentists. We pride ourselves on being able to connect on a level that has our patients relaxed. That’s the neat part of what we do.”

Next week: Dr. Strawn’s work with HANDS, non-profit organization in St. Lucie County that provides medical and dental care to those who cannot afford access to health care.

Midway Dental Center is located at 5054 South 25th St., Fort Pierce. Call (772) 464-4822 or visit the website www.midwaydentalcenter.com.