

DENTIST

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comforting patients, making them feel like they are going to be treated well.”

Among them, a recent patient whose teeth needed fixing so he would be able to complete his cancer treatments, and those who have had pain for years before being given the ability to chew and enjoy their food again.

“Some have broken teeth; they’re embarrassed to smile. When we’re able to fix them; they’re just so happy. They come in and tell us the story over and over ... they refer their friends, and some cry in my office talking about it,” Philipp said. “To be able to help people is so rewarding.”

A painful and frightening experience after a visit to another dentist years ago was the root of Priscilla Ethier’s fear of sitting in the chair. Her daughter-in-law recommended Philipp in 2011.

From the moment she walked into the office, Ethier said, she was treated with kindness. She overheard Philipp talking to other patients and immediately felt comfortable.

“He said, ‘Let’s sit. Let’s talk.’ And this was before taking an X-ray. He got to know me first,” said Ethier, who lives in Sun City West and willingly drives an hour each way for visits.

Ethier said she now has a grand smile she’s proud of.

“He’s the most gentle person I’ve ever known in the medical practice. This is a man who cares about his patients wholeheartedly,” she said.

Philipp graduated from the Temple University School of Dentistry, now known as the Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry, in Philadelphia. He earned his advanced education degree in general dentistry at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry. This equipped Philipp with the ability to perform higher-level procedures such as orthodontics, veneers and implants.

His grandparents lived in Sun City and that, combined with the weather, convinced Philipp to move to the Valley. He worked in two dental offices before launching his own practice. The MBA he earned through night classes while at-



Before Justin Philipp reaches for an instrument, he strives to get to know uneasy patients on a personal level and help them “feel like they are going to be treated well,” he said. PHOTOS BY CHARLIE LEIGHT/ABG



Philipp founded J. Philipp Centers for Family & Cosmetic Dentistry in 2007 and hopes to open a second location this year.

tending dental school in the day gave him an edge over most doctors turned first-time practice owners, who struggle with the business side of the equation.

“I knew that most dentists have their own practice, since this (career) isn’t hospital- or group-based,” Philipp said. “I figured I’d better learn something.”

Philipp planned the opening of his practice for 18 months before moving into a building he discovered while it was under construction. But by the time he opened his doors in the summer of 2007, the recession was just underway. The first few months were smooth sailing but Philipp said by the end of

the year, the tide changed.

The number of patients decreased as people lost their jobs, benefits and steady income. The kind of work people sought also changed.

“Before, they were wanting the full makeover, the Hollywood smiles. Now, they were looking to get a filling ... something to get them through things right now,” Philipp said.

In reaction, he increased advertising and lowered pricing. Around 2011, Philipp noticed a rebound as people began to get jobs.

In the practice’s early days, Philipp had two employees and served about 30 patients a month, he said. Currently, about 300 patients walk

J. PHILIPP CENTERS FOR FAMILY & COSMETIC DENTISTRY

Where: 3230 S. Gilbert Road, Suite 4, Chandler

Employees: 10

Interesting stat: The cost of running a dental practice is 60-80 percent of total revenues, according to Sikka Software Corporation, a provider of software technology to the dental industry.

Details: 480-306-5506, jphilipp.com

through his doors each month, and his staff has grown to 10. He has treated more than 5,000 patients during the life of his practice.

Philipp hopes to add a second East Valley location this year, as well as another dentist. He has started working with obstructive sleep apnea patients, which Philipp called “the next phase of dentistry.”

Philipp has implemented Saturday and early-evening hours to better accommodate patients’ schedules and credited a supportive staff with the practice’s growth.

“When people are able to get their function back (and) improve their appearance, their response is great,” Philipp said.