

From the dentist's chair to salon flair

Hinsdale dentist gives patients makeovers for stylish photo shoot

By Jessica Young
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Amid the teeth-whitening gels, bibs, periodontal drills and packs of latex gloves in Dr. Michael Morgan's cosmetic dentistry office, there sits a professional portrait background and some Canon lenses.

While the makeshift photography studio may seem like an oddity to new patients, it has become part and parcel of Morgan's Hinsdale-based practice, Smiles By Morgan. After he completes reconstruction or enhancement procedures on patrons, he offers them a complimentary makeover at Zazu Salon and Day Spa, followed by a glamour photo shoot to capture the new-and-improved pearly whites.

"We don't have big fans blowing or wild music playing, but some of our guests must have been a model in another life because they go to town with the posing and expressions," laughed Morgan, a La Grange Park resident. "It's like we're in 'America's Next Top Model' with Tyra (Banks) or something."

The portrait concept was an evolution of standard clinical detail shots taken by dentists to study teeth positioning and jawline construction. Morgan had regularly used before-and-after shots in brochures and during PowerPoint presentations for audiences of industry experts at lectures and conventions, but when he switched over from slides to digital negatives, he decided to expand his camera's repertoire.

"The premise evolved from record-keeping purposes to more of a thank-you gift for patients," Morgan said. "After I show them the portraits, some of them start crying because they're amazed at the transformation."

Smiles By Morgan caters to high-end clientele who request everything from \$300 to \$400 cleaning/whitening packages to custom composites or veneers to extensive dental treatments that come with a \$50,000-plus pricetag. Morgan sees patients with TMJ issues, enamel loss caused by eating disorders and even teeth loss, all of which require health-focused work. But others just want a dream smile.

"It's more than about just beauty and aesthetics. Your smile is crucial to your identity," said Morgan, who received his dental degree at the University of Illinois at Chicago and advanced cosmetic training at Baylor University in Texas. "I just read a New York Times poll that said a smile is the

Celebrity teeth envy

According to a survey conducted by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the following celebrities were recognized for their beaming smiles...

■ **Hollywood hottie with the best frown upside down:** Halle Berry

■ **Hollywood hunk with the most awesome pearly whites:** Matthew McConaughey

■ **Teen idol with the cutest grin:** Hilary Duff

■ **Female athlete with the prettiest beam:** Maria Sharapova

■ **Male athlete with the most swoon-worthy smile:** Tiger Woods

■ **Celebrity smile most requested by AACD patients:** Julia Roberts

No. 1 thing people notice on another person. So society is really conscious of tooth color and alignment, and it's connected with your confidence and interaction with others."

So the opportunity for a photo session that celebrates a new look helps many patients get comfortable in their skin preceding a significant life event like a wedding, job transition or public-speaking appearance, he added.

For 18-year-old Tiffanie Reschke, that milestone is high school graduation. Previous dental work left her bonded two front teeth discolored and rough, and Morgan used two custom composite resin veneers on her front teeth, custom composite restorations on her back teeth, laser gum recontouring and laser whitening to give Reschke a brighter smile and fix the chipping.

Then it was time to head over to Zazu to be pampered with a hairstyle and make-up session.

"It was fun to let myself get the super-model treatment," said Reschke, who travels from Chicago for appointments. "Dr. Morgan had the lighting and backdrop all set up, and he'd instruct me on how to angle my body or tilt my head.

"He even retouched the pictures on Photoshop before he gave them to us," she added. "My mom and I decided to use these for my graduation announcements, and I'm giving them out as senior pictures because the ones through school don't hold a candle to his."

Morgan is no amateur hobbyist. He honed his skills at the Nikon Photography



Submitted photos

Tiffanie Reschke is using this portrait, shot by Dr. Michael Morgan, as her graduation picture. Morgan, a professional photographer, offers complimentary makeovers and glamour shots to patients of his cosmetic dentistry practice.



Before and after shots of Tiffanie Reschke's smile.

School and took private lessons with Tom Bresnahan of Tom Bresnahan Portrait Studio in La Grange. During the one-hour photo shoot with patients, Morgan takes 60 to 80 different shots with the help of a reflector and a special portrait lens often used by wedding photographers.

"We usually use a black background because it allows the camera to analyze color better," he said. "I'm trying to capture the essence of their personality and highlight the teeth."

The professional head shots line Morgan's office walls, and many are posted in a smile gallery on the practice's Web site.

Former Wheaton resident Bob Glidden's new grin is among the promotional photos posted in the gallery. He went to Morgan because of a grinding habit that wore down his teeth to near nubs.

"My teeth were disappearing on me, and

I needed to preserve them," Glidden said. "I had gotten self-conscious about them, and I wasn't going out of my way to flash a smile."

After getting upper and lower porcelain veneers on his front teeth and porcelain crowns on the back, Glidden was surprised to learn about Morgan's second professional undertaking. He agreed to a shoot.

"They're really high-quality pictures that really showcase my smile in the best way," Glidden said. "It's too bad I haven't needed them for business purposes. I'm going to tell my wife to put it up next to my casket when I kick the bucket."

According to Morgan, who has led portrait training programs for other dentists, no other practices offer professional photography in-house.

For more information, call (630) 325-2525 or visit www.smilesbymorgan.com.