

An Interview with Dr. Chris Port from Sophie Magazine's May 2009 Issue

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Asheville Smile Center

It's rather uncommon to find people who are genuinely excited about going to the dentist. But with the Asheville Smile Center, there's no question this dentist's office is at the top of patients' lists.

The Asheville Smile Center is a place where the patient is the top priority and wouldn't be here without Dr. Chris Port's diligence and hard work. Dr. Port, owner and founder of the Smile Center, and his skilled team are devoted to enhancing the quality of your dental health and perfecting the natural beauty of your smile in a peaceful and relaxing environment.

Upon entering the Smile Center, patients get a sense of the pleasant calmness that resonates throughout the office. With Dr. Port's innovative work and talented, friendly staff, the Asheville Smile Center is the perfect place to improve your dental health and rejuvenate your smile.

Sophie: Give us a little history on the Asheville Smile Center.

Dr. Port: The Asheville Smile Center essentially began over ten years ago when I completed dental school in Augusta, Georgia and relocated to WNC with my wife Heather. I purchased an existing dental practice just north of downtown Hendersonville and served our patients from that location until 2007. In September of 2007, we moved to our new location in Arden just off of Long Shoals Road overlooking beautiful Lake Julian. One advantage of our new office is that we are more conveniently located for residents of Asheville and Western Carolina while still caring for our patients from our Hendersonville location. The main goal I had when designing the Asheville Smile Center was to create a state-of-the-art, yet ultimately comfortable dental facility where patients can experience all the best that modern dental care has to offer.

Sophie: Who makes up the majority of your patients?

Dr. Port: We care for a very diverse group of clients at our office. We see everyone from television personalities to stay-at-home moms, grandparents to grandkids, families and many, many more. Most of our patients are locals, but we do have some who travel from Charlotte, Hickory, upstate South Carolina, and even Tennessee for their routine dental visits. While our practice is mainly focused on adult dental care, we have many children and teenagers who come to us along with their parents. Ultimately, we strive to provide a relaxing dental experience for all. In fact, just the other day a patient commented, "I can't believe it...I'm so relaxed I'm falling asleep...and you're working on my teeth. It's amazing!"

Sophie: What inspired you to begin this type of patient-focused, aesthetically-oriented dental practice?

Dr. Port: When I was a kid, my first dentist was my grandfather. He was well known for being a gentle and caring doctor, and he served patients here in North Carolina for many years. Naturally, my introduction to the world of dentistry occurred early on and was a wonderful experience, but I didn't always know that I was going to become a dentist. In fact, when I was in high school I wanted to go into architecture and design houses and office buildings. It wasn't until I was in college that dentistry became my career choice. Interestingly enough, now I get to help my patients design and rejuvenate their best smiles, kind of like architecture, just with teeth.

I meet people all the time who tell me about the terrible dental experiences they've suffered. They tell me of times when their doctor wouldn't listen to them or ignored their concerns, and they had to endure pain and discomfort. Many also tell me they've hated the appearance of their smile for years and years, but were too afraid to do anything about it except suffer in silence. It inspired me to create a place where patients can feel relaxed and comfortable again, a place where people have new hope of achieving that smile they've always longed for and can be proud of but thought was impossible. Our mission is to help our patients fall in love with their smiles again.

Sophie: What do you do to help create positive experiences for your patients?

Dr. Port: From the moment our patients come through the door, they can tell it's not the typical dental office they've experienced in the past. In our reception area, a relaxing nature DVD plays on a plasma television. Fresh, hot coffee and relaxing herbal tea can be enjoyed prior to your visit, and the smell of freshly baked cookies fills the air. The cookies are a huge hit. What's more relaxing than a warm, melt-in-your-mouth chocolate chip cookie?

During treatment, modern dental anesthetics are used to help ensure complete comfort. Special dental chairs gently massage your back and enhance your experience. You can drift away on a "digital vacation" as you view one of our beautiful travel DVDs in our treatment rooms. You can even enjoy a paraffin wax treatment for your hands while your dental work is completed. Ultimately, we create positive experiences because we place our focus directly on our patients' needs and their ultimate comfort.

Sophie: How do you get that across to them?

Dr. Port: First and foremost, my goal is to find out what their wants and desires are. I have to listen to them before I can

help them find solutions to their problems. Really understanding their concerns is vital to establishing trust, and without trust, it's hard for the patient to feel relaxed and enjoy the results they're looking for. Secondly, we've implemented advanced technology throughout the office. I've found that when my patients have a true understanding of their current dental situation, they are better equipped to enjoy a lifetime of great dental health and lasting smiles.

Sophie: What kinds of technology are you referring to?

Dr. Port: Just about everything we do in the office is technologically advanced in one way or another. We use digital cameras to photograph our patients' teeth and smiles. We review these pictures with our patients so they get to see exactly what we see. We have used digital X-ray technology for more than six years now. One of the greatest things about digital X-rays is that the amount of radiation our patients are exposed to is decreased by as much as 80%. The images are also fantastic.

My office was one of the first in WNC to implement dental laser technology for both diagnosis and treatment. We have one type of laser that is used for locating new, often hidden cavities before they become bigger problems. Our patients love being able to catch things while they are small. We also utilize a treatment laser that allows us to treat some cavities without having to use the traditional "drill" and perform minor gum procedures without our patients having to endure more invasive surgeries.

One of our latest uses of technology involves communicating directly with our patients. We now have the ability to send an e-mail or text message as a reminder for dental appointments. By staying in touch this way, we are less likely to interrupt our patients' busy lives, and they are still able to stay up to date with their dental visits.

Sophie: How do you and your team stay current on the latest advances in dentistry?

Dr. Port: We are constantly seeking out opportunities to advance our dental education and learning. We attend multiple continuing education courses throughout the year and routinely earn three to four times the minimum amount required to keep our licenses current. One of our goals is to add at least one new procedure to our office every six months.

In addition to attending courses, I've had the pleasure of mentoring other dentists as they were learning new techniques and procedures for their own offices. I've also been able to work with dental teams across the country, helping them implement a more patient-focused, comfort-oriented style of dental practice.

Sophie: What excites you most about dentistry these days?

Dr. Port: I would have to say that one of the most exciting things is being able to help provide hope for those patients that have all but given up on having a smile they can be proud of. My patients don't have to suffer through life with crooked, gapped, twisted, broken-down, worn-out, yellow, or just plain ugly teeth anymore. They don't have to put up with old, less-than-natural looking dentistry either. Contemporary dental materials allow me to rejuvenate someone's smile without it looking fake. Modern techniques allow me to straighten crooked smiles comfortably and conservatively. I not only want my clients to have great dental care, I also want them to enjoy wonderful smiles that they absolutely love and can't stop sharing with others.

Sophie: Putting work aside, tell us about your family. What do you do in your free time when you're not concentrating on running a business?

Dr. Port: Most of my free time is devoted to my family. My wife Heather and I have two wonderful children; Hailey just turned 9, and Hunter is now 6. They love playing in the yard with our two dogs and riding their bikes in the neighborhood. We do a "movie night" once a week. The kids love Disney movies and lots of popcorn. It's great fun. Now that Hailey and Hunter are getting a little older, we enjoy going for hikes at the NC Arboretum and along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Sophie: Are you able to get any personal time for yourself?

Dr. Port: Every so often, I'm able to sneak in a round of golf. It's great getting out and spending time in our beautiful Carolina mountains, and it keeps me energized for the rigors of running my practice and caring for my patients. My golf game however always stays about the same, never really getting worse, but not getting better either. Fortunately for my patients, I'm a much better dentist than I am a golfer.

Sophie: Dr. Port, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to give us a glimpse into what awaits clients at the Asheville Smile Center.

Dr. Port: It was truly my pleasure.

The Asheville Smile Center is located at 600 Julian Lane, Suite 610, in Arden, NC. You can contact them at 828.483.4150, 828.490.4433, or to read up on client testimonials as well as what Dr. Port can do for you, visit their Web site at AshevilleSmileCenter.com.

