

CHAPTER 34

THE POWER OF GIVING BACK

BY DR. VINCENT J. MONTICCIOLO,
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Using our talents and opportunities to help others is essential to a fulfilling life. In dental school I was only focused on mastering the art of treating patients, but when I started practicing, it led to a huge question. How can I make a positive difference in my community? Combined with my career and my desire, I came up with the answer. I decided I could use my dentistry skills and my practice to help those in need of dental care in Port Huron, Michigan, the location of my first dental practice. The first step to accomplish this task was to choose the date. The best date I noticed on my calendar was the day after our ultimate day of thanks—Thanksgiving. Giving someone the gift of a more confident smile was the best way to start the season of appreciation. Although I might be biased, as a dentist, I believe that our smiles are a reflection of our souls, every bit as much as our eyes.

THE CALL TO SOMETHING GREATER

In 1998, our family relocated to Florida, for an opportunity my wife, Dr. Natalie Monticciolo, had in her field of dermatology. Michigan then became a place to visit. Every year we would travel back to Michigan to visit family and friends. On those trips, we would talk about what we were doing to help those in need and this led to a desire to do

more. Both of us agreed that BIGGER would be BETTER. Once we became established in Florida, we started contemplating how best to make it happen. We picked a new holiday to hold our event on. It was Valentine's Day and I coined the name, *Dentistry from the Heart*, for my event. We held our first event with the help of my staff and one other dentist who volunteered. On that wonderful day we saw almost 200 patients. And this event hasn't stopped growing since!

A TRIPLE WIN

Going bigger and better has helped us realize the triple win we receive from good deeds. It is an amazing feeling that stems from the awareness that ideas which are powered by a genuine desire to help others can evolve all on their own. Initially, we didn't advertise in the media; it was word of mouth through churches and centers that helped people who could not afford their own dental care. During those days, I became the face behind *Dentistry from the Heart*, but without amazing volunteers, none of it could have come together. The result has been a triple win!

- **Communities win:** Helping people who live in our communities receive the basic dental care that they need (extractions, fillings, and cleanings) creates an instant awareness of how much it means to others. The needy we help are grateful. We are equally thankful for the opportunity to help them, too. At these events, the energy is so positive and appealing. Reaching out to those in need feels amazing and inspires others to pay it forward.
- **Patients win:** Nothing makes us feel better than when we get feedback from our patients, telling us how proud they feel that we are their dental care provider. Our patients are a part of the community in which we do business. That makes them a wonderful outlet for helping us remain connected to the public in a positive manner.
- **Our dental office wins:** This was the most surprising win of the concept. I hadn't really thought of it directly, but realizing that my practice wins when we reach out to the community has given me a great platform to spread the message about what we've been doing. The ultimate compliment I receive is from new patients. They mention that they saw our event on T.V. and were so moved by the charity. They knew that we needed to be their new dental

office. The adage of “no good deed goes unrewarded” is definitely applicable.

This event is now an annual one. It has never been promoted through paid advertising. To do this, I had to get creative. Over the years, I was invited to lecture on practice management at dental conventions across the country. I always took some time to mention *Dentistry from the Heart* at these events. Dentists were interested, eager for more information, and willing to host these events in their own neighborhoods. Our first milestone was when we grew to the point where we were holding nearly 50 events per year.

TAKING IT FURTHER

We needed to keep the spirit of our mission aligned with our passion. The numbers dictated the need to hire more staff and streamline the systems. In order to do that, we became a 501(c) charity in 2006. It was the only way to effectively keep up with the demand and desire to have more *Dentistry from the Heart* events. There were a few things we wanted to ensure when communities were hosting an event.

- 1. Events had the same feel.** We wanted the experience and process to be consistent. This was done through developing a strategic plan on how to prepare for the event, and making the day of the event as smooth and seamless as possible.
- 2. The charity wouldn't be vulnerable to legal risk.** Since this is dental care, we needed to make sure things were being done consistently and within local and national dental regulatory laws. Our events are for providing dental needs that help deliver smiles! We do this through a lot of prep work for quality dental care, in a healthcare environment. This is easy for a regular day at the office and considerably more complex for a day that will be busier than anything most of us have experienced.
- 3. Bookkeeping and record keeping of events.** In order to keep our 501(c) status, it is necessary to keep accurate records for all the *Dentistry from the Heart* events. Anyone who has worked with a charity understands the importance. This is achieved by having a follow-up with the participating dental offices afterward, so we can get all of the necessary data to keep our records in order.

4. Their event wouldn't overlap with others in their market or area. Months of planning goes into a *Dentistry from the Heart* event and we are grateful for everyone who commits to holding one. Therefore, we guarantee their event date for a 3-month exclusive period in their area. This way, the media attention is focused on the event and gets the press it deserves. Communities are also able to organize, plan, and prepare for the big day.

With our four criteria in mind, we created a marketing package for dental offices that wish to host an event. These are helpful because they contain the following: press releases, commercials, billboards, banners, t-shirts, donated dental products, and detailed instructions on how to take the event from idea to completion. This is organized through *Dentistry from the Heart*. We work to train the volunteers on what needs to be done. It has proven itself to be highly effective and the results show there are now over 250 annual *Dentistry from the Heart* events in 50 states and 5 different countries. Our marketing packages are available in English or Spanish to accommodate all our different markets. More languages will come as we continue to grow.

BIG EVENTS — BIG ORGANIZATION NEEDED

To give perspective, our local event in New Port Richey draws at least 500 people who are standing in line from the night before, ready to receive their free dental care. A plan has to be in place and the planning starts months before the day of the event. It may sound chaotic, but it is also FUN!

To host an event you need:

- **Staff:** Staff and volunteers are essential. Various dentists, hygienists, assistants, and other dental personnel from neighboring practices also volunteer, along with my office team. Dental assisting school students get credit hours for the work they do, another winning element. The volunteer staff also prepares the paperwork for the registration of patients, manages patient flow, and prepares sample bags for the needy.

Smile Faith Foundation is a great charity that helps us with providing assistance and organization. They are focused on people who are down on their luck, and help to provide personal and career counseling, as well as access to dental care. What better

way to find a job than with a confident smile on your face? During the event, they hand out coffee and hot chocolate to those in line awaiting their free dental care. They have been an integral part toward keeping our event festive.

News crews televise throughout the night as additional patients continue to arrive. The staff arrives at the site at 4:00 a.m. We open our doors at 7:00 a.m. and continue until everyone has been seen. There is a one hour lunch break in which the volunteers get a great meal from food donated by local restaurants.. Plus, this is the perfect time to take a photograph of everyone who has played a part in bringing the *Dentistry from the Heart* event to fruition. Many additional photos, videos, Facebook updates, and tweets are uploaded to remind us of the amazing experience that everyone has encountered. All can be viewed via: www.dentistryfromtheheart.org and associated links.

- **Dental Offices:** Over the years, we have come across different weather conditions. We have now incorporated tents, porta-potties, and heater systems, when necessary. Systems are also in place to ensure that dental operatories are constantly turned over for maximum efficiency. One staff person assists the dentist and another cleans and sterilizes the room for the next patient.
- **Process:** The events are first come, first served to any patient in need. Our registration staff distributes patient intake and medical history forms. Upon completion, a number is given to each patient to keep the order and to ensure their spot in line.

This past year, our individual event helped more than 500 people and over 600 teeth were extracted. This was achieved with the help of 16 dentists and 100 volunteers. Without them, these events would not be possible. The desire to give back to their communities keeps the charity growing. It's the reason *Dentistry from the Heart* has become an annual affair that the entire community gets excited for and thus, wants to help!

BEYOND THE DENTAL WORK

How do we keep the patients happy and energized when they are waiting their turn? That's a question that many of you may be wondering. We've come up with some great ways to keep this as enjoyable as it is necessary for those who can't afford dental care. Some of the favorite ideas that

are incorporated into our events are:

- Massage therapy from students at local massage schools
- Music and DJs to keep people dancing and laughing
- A tooth fairy is present, bringing laughter and lots of lively conversation
- Free skin cancer screening, which my wife provides, along with a sample bag that contains soaps, toothbrush, toothpaste, a t-shirt, and sunscreen
- Blood donation is always something that is important. At our event, those that donate blood get priority in line. This gives patients an opportunity to give back to their communities on the day they are receiving needed dental care.

THE VISION KEEPS GROWING

Today, *Dentistry from the Heart* has a full-time staff that works diligently on the coordination and organization of all our events, which are global! A few of the things they do in a given day are:

- Answer calls from people who are in need of dental care. They direct them to the event nearest to them.
- Organize and coordinate all the marketing packets. Each event has unique marketing and has to be customized to the event, including logos of sponsors and contacting the various media outlets about the event for press releases and publicity.
- Follow-up after the event with the dental offices for bookkeeping, as well as ideas on how to further finesse and grow the event. Each event allows us the chance to continue to improve.

As the charity continues to grow, I have increased my time and support. I love being actively involved in this concept that started so small and grew so big. For the most part, all funds that I contribute and donations that are given by the community and office go toward running the charity. This is the driving force behind our tag line, which is: **Smile. It's free.**

A CALL TO ACTION

When I decided to hold the first Florida event back in 2001, I never

imagined that it would grow to reach every state, as well as Puerto Rico, Canada (which holds an average of 15 events per year), New Zealand, United Kingdom, and Ireland. To date, *Dentistry from the Heart* has provided more than 15 million dollars in free dental care. Nothing is more humbling to me, my family, and my staff, then seeing dentists willing to volunteer their time which allows *Dentistry from the Heart* to flourish.

The true **Power of Giving Back** is something to make you smile!



About Dr. Vince

With a passion for learning that is equal to his passion for helping others, Dr. Vincent Monticciolo has created a life where his skills and purpose are combined. Graduating from the University of Detroit School of Dentistry, Dr. Monticciolo received many awards and was selected to the Honors Clinical Program. In 2001, he earned his Masters Degree in Business Administration. Also, in 2013, he earned his Law Degree, all while practicing dentistry full-time and taking various continuing education courses.

In addition to his family and sedation dentistry practice, Dr. Monticciolo has been driven by opportunities to lead through example, which were first shown in his days as a part-time faculty member at the dental school he'd once attended. Over time, his drive grew into leadership and a commitment to serve his community, and it was there that everything really fell into place for him.

As inspiration to help struggling individuals who could not afford dental care took shape, Dr. Monticciolo found a way to improve the community he lived in by offering free dental care to a few needy individuals. It was an incredible experience and Dr. Monticciolo, along with his wife, Dr. Natalie Monticciolo, began to think of how they could take this simple concept and make it grow into something larger. After relocating to the Tampa, Florida area, *Dentistry from the Heart* was formed in 2001. It has become synonymous with Dr. Monticciolo's energy and efforts to embrace giving back. Since then, *Dentistry from the Heart* has become a charity that helps coordinate over 250 events in all 50 states, as well as internationally.

Furthermore, in 2012, Dr. Monticciolo started Dental Care Delivered, a mobile dental service that provides care to residents in assisted living facilities and nursing homes around the west coast of Florida. It is another step to ensuring that more people can have the smile they deserve, regardless of their circumstances.

Today, Dr. Monticciolo lives with his wife and two daughters in Palm Harbor, Florida. Aside from his charity work, he enjoys spending quality time with his family and practicing dentistry. Seeing how his daughters beam with pride when his *Dentistry from the Heart* event makes the news every year, featuring him, the founder and spokesperson of this charity, is a great reminder of the impact he has on those less fortunate.

Honors and Awards

- Honors graduate at dental school

- Academy of General Dentistry Outstanding Student Award
- Comprehensive Dentistry Award
- Frances B. Vedder Society Crown and Bridge Prosthodontics Award
- Omicron Kappa Upsilon (National Dental Honor Society)
- Alpha Sigma Nu (National Jesuit Honor Society)
- Class President in Dental School

Memberships and Societies

- American Dental Society
- Florida Dental Society
- West Pasco Dental Society
- American Society of Dental Anesthesiology
- Society for Special Care Dentistry
- Academy of Dentistry for Persons with Disabilities
- American Society for Geriatric Dentistry
- Florida HealthCare Association

Contact information

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