



www.HowardCountySmiles.com • New Patients 410.988.4167 • Current Patients 410.730.4674

Inside This Issue

- Giving Is a Virtue
- 3 Snow Shoveling Safety Tips
- Coins4Connie: For the Kids
- 'Tis the Season for Toothaches
- Cheesy Ham and Potato Breakfast Casserole
- Meme Corner
- Escape to Bocas del Toro

Escape to Bocas del Toro
Visit a True Island Paradise in Panama's Caribbean

There's something about a hammock, a chilled drink, and the sound of the sea that can't be beat. As temperatures drop and your calendar fills up, the idea of slowing down – way down – is probably sounding more appealing than ever. The Caribbean is calling, and some of the most idyllic, laid-back beaches are awaiting your visit in Bocas del Toro in Northeastern Panama.

Known for its lush landscapes and quiet beaches, sleepy Bocas del Toro is made up of nine main islands, just a hop away from Panama City. One of the most biologically diverse places on the planet, this beautiful archipelago is perfect for adventure seekers and beach bums alike. There's something for every kind of Caribbean traveler.

Ecotourism is huge here, as it's home to Panama's first national marine park, and outdoorsy visitors can enjoy snorkeling and scuba diving lessons from Bocas Town, cave exploration at Basti bat caves, hiking to Almirante waterfalls, and zip lining. Walk

around to find tours; Bocas Town is very easily walkable, and pedestrian paths lead to great discoveries sprinkled all over the island.

Loungers and foodies enjoy relaxed days at picturesque beaches and evenings devouring the best of the best locally sourced and fresh food at El Ultimo Refugio, which serves an eclectic menu of seafood, fusion, and creative cocktails. There are a number of affordable places to stay, but if you're looking for something a little more out of the way, check out the nice stand-alone forest cabins overlooking



the bay at the eco-friendly La Loma Jungle Lodge on the beautiful Isla Bastimentos.

Travel + Leisure Magazine named Bocas del Toro in Panama this year's best place to travel, so make your reservations before this amazing place becomes more popular with tourists. Whether you're looking to party with backpackers or prefer to bird-watch your way through the mangroves, you'll find the escape you need at Bocas del Toro.

THANK
You!

Thank you to everybody who participated in our Blessing Bag handout. It was a great success! Our patients loved the opportunity to give back!

Keep on the lookout for our latest patient appreciation. We will be doing a Patient of the Month every month with special prizes!

December 18th

The staff will be volunteering at Happy Helpers for the Homeless in Baltimore.

Wishing everyone safe and happy holidays surrounded by family, friends and good health!



Giving Is a *Virtue*
Dedication to Service Starts With Kids



My niece, Connie, was just 6 years old when she passed away from leukemia in 1999. Her illness and death had a remarkable impact on all of us, including my kids.

After Connie passed away, my youngest daughter, Alexis, decided to put together a toy donation for the kids staying at the children's hospital where Connie was being treated. As a youngster, and completely of her own volition, Alexis began collecting donations and promoting the cause outside of school over coming various obstacles. Rolling with the punches, she continued growing the charity in spite of this setback, and ended up taking a truckload of toys down to the hospital for the children that year.

Now in college, Breanna chose her sorority based on their strong affiliation with St. Jude's Children's Hospital, and her sister Alexis has carried Coins4Connie into their adulthood.

We've given our kids a lot of freedom growing up to look at the world and come to their own conclusions, and they've been charitable and giving since they were very young. I remember coming home on a few different occasions to find them standing out front with a lemonade stand, selling some of their unwanted items. But instead of taking the money to buy candy or toys, they'd take that money and donate it to people in need. The year my dad passed away, the family took my mom to Disney for Thanksgiving. We couldn't go, so instead of

our regularly scheduled dinner, we decided to feed the homeless on Thanksgiving Day.

It's interesting, but even though we come from one of the most affluent areas in the country, my kids have learned to be grounded. As my girls continue their philanthropic involvement, I have to take a moment to soak it up. I'm so proud of what they've accomplished and that their hearts are still in the right place.

As we look forward to Christmas, I feel very fortunate that Howard County Smiles has been able to participate in community outreach events and that we've had so many wonderful opportunities to give back. Thank you to everyone who participated in helping distribute blessing bags to people in need last month, and to my team for attending Happy Helpers for the Homeless' community service event in Baltimore.

It's great to know that I can be part of a practice where the team genuinely cares about the community and part of a community that genuinely cares about one another. If we all continue to contribute and care, I think the new year will be off to a fantastic start.

Happy holidays from Howard County Smiles!

- Dr. Becker

Winter Safety 101

3 Snow Shoveling Safety Tips



Unfortunately, with this chore comes danger. The American Journal of Emergency Medicine reports that 11,500 Americans end up in the emergency room every year from shoveling snow. If the responsibility will fall on your shoulders this winter, be sure to keep these safety tips in mind:

WARM UP FIRST
“Picking up a shovel and moving hundreds of pounds of snow,

particularly after doing nothing physical for several months, can put a big strain on the heart,” cautions Harvard Health Executive Editor Patrick J. Skerrett. It’s important that you warm up before you dig in. Take a brisk walk or do some dynamic stretches for at least 10 minutes before getting started.

Around 30 states in the United States receive over 10 inches of snowfall every year, and there’s a chance most of us will have to spend some amount of time shoveling snow. This activity is not what most would call “fun,” but it’s a necessary chore.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY
Make sure you’re dressed in enough layers to keep you warm. Water-repellent clothing will also provide both ventilation and insulation. Wear shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground. Also, make sure you can see clearly at all times. Don’t let a hat or scarf obscure your vision and keep you from seeing a patch of ice.

PRACTICE PROPER LIFTING Lower back injuries caused by poor shoveling posture and execution make up 34.3 percent of emergency room visits from snow shoveling. Keep yourself safe by practicing proper technique. Bend at your knees, lift with your legs, shoulders, and torso, and never let your back take on any of the strain. Check out this video from Virginia’s Fairfax County Risk Management Division to learn more about safe snow shoveling: goo.gl/UnnOFp.

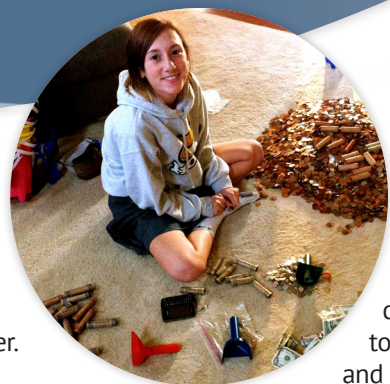
Coins4Connie: For the Kids Charity Began as Tribute to Young Cancer Fighter

Coins4Connie has one goal in mind: to make the world a better place. The nonprofit charity organization does this by raising funds and collecting toys for children in hospitals throughout the Washington D.C. and Baltimore area – bringing hope to those who need it the most. It all started with one girl, the charity’s namesake.

Constance “Connie” O’Connell was born December 17, 1993. When she was 11 months old, she was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia and given an 8 percent chance of survival. For six years, she fought bravely through remission and relapse. In 1999, Connie started to decline,

despite two bone marrow transplants from her sister, Liz, who was just a few years older. Connie passed away in her family’s arms at the age of 6.

Connie spent most of her short life battling a cancer, but she did it with a smile on her face. Her family and friends remember her joyful attitude and courage beyond her years. With heartfelt gratitude for the love and kindness she was shown during her fight, the Coins4Connie charity was created in her name. Children in Connie’s circumstance lead different lives than other children and must exemplify a level of courage not asked of those who have lived much longer. The



charity strives to bring hope and joy to the

lives of these kids and develop meaningful relationships with them. In doing so, they honor Connie’s memory.

Coins4Connie has been active for several years, raising funds to spread happiness and pay it forward, including Tri Delta Sorority Fundraisers. 100 percent of all moneys go to children in hospitals around the Baltimore and Washington D.C. area. To learn more about events or to donate directly, visit BeckerLexi.Wixsite.com/coins4connie or visit the Coins4Connie Facebook page.

‘Tis the Season for Toothaches Protect Your Teeth This Month



Welcome to December, when families are brought together and the sugary sweets flow freely! Candy canes, truffles, and so many peppermint-flavored things do wonders for our taste buds during the holidays, but not for our teeth. Developing tooth problems will really cramp your jolly.

Tooth sensitivity happens for a few reasons. It could indicate a cavity, or it could be a symptom of **thinning enamel** or **receding gums** – neither of which are good. How do those transpire? Lifestyle and age are common factors, but it could signal a deeper problem. Our dentists at Howard County Smiles have the expertise to get to the bottom of it.

If the pain is sharp and stabbing, you’ve got yourself a bona fide toothache. It could mean your tooth is **cracked, cavities, or infected** – any of which can be fixed with a visit to the dentist. The same goes for a root canal. However, it might not even be your teeth. **Sinus infections** often have similar effects to toothaches when they originate elsewhere. You can tell those apart by checking for nasal congestion and tenderness around the eyes, forehead, and sinuses.

Your sensitivity could also be from an **occlusion** of your bite. The treatment of this can be tricky, but at Howard County smiles, we have the expertise and tools to get your bite into shipshape. Dr. Ray Becker,

who is internationally recognized expert in **temporomandibular disorders**, provides the expertise. Our T-Scan service is state-of-the-art, very few dentists in the area can provide it.

All of these hurt, but you can prevent many of them. The strategy is age-old – and for good reason. Brush twice a day, floss once a day, especially during this time of year, and get cleanings and checkups by professional dentists, such as our wonderful staff here at Howard County Smiles. We’d be happy to help.

May your holidays be merry and bright, and may your teeth be healthy and white!



Recipe inspired by allrecipes.com

Cheesy Ham and Potato Breakfast Casserole

Ingredients

- 1 (32 ounce) package frozen hash brown potatoes
- 8 ounces cooked ham, diced
- 2 (10 ounce) cans condensed cream of potato soup
- 1 (16 ounce) container sour cream
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. In a large bowl, mix hash browns, ham, cream of potato soup, sour cream, and cheddar cheese. Spread evenly into prepared dish. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.
3. Bake 1 hour in the preheated oven, or until bubbly and lightly brown. Serve immediately.

Laughing Gas

