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Visit a hustling, bustling tourist trap and what do you get? Crowds of competitive travelers and a local populace that is sick to death of them. Visit a place with happy people, and you get good service, friendly faces, and you'll learn firsthand what Harvard researchers affirmed in a 2012 study: Happiness is contagious.

Luckily for the average traveler, the places that topped a nationwide Gallup poll and the United Nations' annual World Happiness Report have plenty to offer in addition to cheerful locals.

The Happiest States in the U.S. If we were to tell you that Hawaii is the happiest state in the country, you probably wouldn't be surprised. And sure enough, Hawaii ranked first in overall happiness for the sixth consecutive year. The sunny beaches, rich culture, and perfect weather give tourists a taste of paradise that the natives enjoy all year long.

Next in line is a state that has little in common with the Aloha State. Alaska came in second place for the third consecutive year. With eight

national parks, including Denali, Glacier Bay, and Gates of the Arctic, Alaska's 663,000 square miles are filled to the brim with the wonders of nature.

The Happiest Country in the World Denmark has long been the standard-bearer in this category, but this year it relinquished the title to its Scandinavian sister. Norway is home to some of the most breathtaking vistas on Earth, most notably its western fjords like the world-famous Geirangerfjord and Nærøfjord. For the city wanderer, you'll find choice seaside restaurants and walkable streets in towns like Bergen, the country's second-largest city, which sports rainbow architecture and a 15th-century waterfront.

Knowing the heart of a destination begins and ends with its people. Tack on beautiful scenery and daydream-worthy activities, and you just found yourself the perfect vacation.

Howard County Smiles Announcements

BIG NEWS!!

We will have limited 7 a.m. hygiene appointments available starting on September 5! They will be very popular and will fill up fast. Call now to schedule your hygiene appointment!

Hygiene Appointments

All hygiene appointments are filling up for the rest of summer. Call NOW to schedule your children and college-bound students before the back-to-school rush starts!

We wish you all a pleasant and relaxing summer!

28 Years Strong How I Stumbled Onto a Career I Love

It's been a privilege to work with Dr. Becker since 1989. The funny thing is, I didn't set out to make a career in dentistry; I sort of stumbled onto it.

I grew up in Chicago, where I went to school and met my now-ex-husband. We eventually relocated here for work, and it's been my home ever since. For the first few years here, I was a stay-at-home mom. But as soon as my youngest was old enough for school, I felt the itch to go back to work. I wasn't sure how to go about that – I married young, so I had no experience or college degree. I just had a desire to work.

A friend referred me to Dr. Becker, who had only been in practice for a year and was looking for a dental assistant. The interview went well, and despite having no dental experience except as a patient, I was hired.

Those of you who know Dr. Becker know that he's a teacher just as much as a dentist. Education is part of our mantra here. For the first few years, our new practice wasn't booked wall-to-wall like it is today, so Dr. Becker had time to train me in everything. I was in awe of his expertise then, and I still am today.

As his assistant I did it all – assisted Dr. Becker, checked patients in and out, sterilized equipment, and worked with insurance. It was also important to me to make sure all of our patients were comfortable with procedures and understood every aspect of their dental health. We were a two-person team. But thanks to Ray's training and teaching, I've always felt confident in every aspect of Howard County Smiles.

One year became five, then 10. Now I've been here for 28 years. I know it's unique to spend this long doing something with no prior training, but



I believe so much in what we do here that I've never had an inclination to leave.

The learning didn't stop when we became busy, and I take a lot of pride in everything I've learned over the years. There's no job more rewarding than one that makes you feel like you have something to contribute every day.

Our patients are one thing that makes working here so rewarding. Some of you have been here as long as I have! We even have a few three-generation families. We hope we've been able to provide a fun, personable office for you. I'm grateful to the rest of our wonderful team for making day-to-day time at the office so much fun.

In my personal life, I'm engaged to a wonderful man, Ken, who I've been with for five years. We love to take weekend trips on his motorcycle. I also love spending time with my children and precious grandsons, who live locally.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and I hope I see you soon!

- Margaret

3 Drink Hacks to Keep Your Beverage Cool



THE SUN IS SUMMER'S GREATEST ALLY — AND GREATEST ENEMY. For every sun-soaked day at the beach, there are sunburns trying to ruin the party. For every excuse to drink an icy beverage, the sunshine's more determined to keep the drink from staying cool.

These hacks will allow you to enjoy the benefits of the summer sun without the side effect of a warm beverage.

First, let's say you just got home from the grocery store, where you purchased a 12-pack of your favorite soda. You're thirsty and it's room temperature at best, right? Patience is a virtue, but there's nothing wrong with accelerating the process. **Fill a bowl with**

ice water and add a teaspoon of salt, then submerge a can of soda in the bowl. This process will cool your drink more than twice as fast as just putting it in the freezer.

This next example takes less work, but it takes more freezer space. **Wet a paper towel and wrap it around a bottle or can before you place it in the freezer.** The contents inside will cool much more quickly.

If you have more time to plan, this hack will keep your drink cold for longer. Ice doesn't fit in a bottle, and freezing your beer or other beverage will get you to Slushy Town in a hurry. **Fill an empty bottle about halfway, put the cap on, and place it in the freezer on its side.** When it's frozen, pour your favorite beverage inside — the ice from top to bottom will keep the contents cool on the go.

The sun is hot, and the summer is long. You need the comfort of a cool beverage to help you get through it. Keep cool, wear sunscreen, and have fun!

Are Veneers Right for You?

In recent years, dental veneers — the thin, custom-made porcelain shells used to cover the front surfaces of teeth — have become a popular procedure for people of all ages. When done correctly, veneers can quickly correct chipped, rotated, or discolored teeth.

WHY WOULD I GET VENEERS?

Veneers can be placed in only one visit to our office using the advanced CEREC® milling machine! Also, it's easy to change the color of veneers since we have the specialized laboratory equipment right in our office to optimize your individual esthetics. For more information on the CEREC® technique visit our YouTube channel! Simply go to YouTube and search 'Howard County Smiles' and like, view, and share these highly educational videos with your family and friends!

Porcelain veneers have the real look of teeth and will not stain over time like typical bonding. Veneers also add to the strength of your natural teeth by capping and protecting them with a durable material that is exactly matched to the properties of your natural teeth. Lastly, veneers can be customized to fit your individual facial symmetry and style.

Veneers are low maintenance. However, porcelain veneers should be brushed and flossed the same way you treat your natural teeth. It's also important to remember to visit your dentist for professional polishing procedures with a special, nonabrasive paste.

I DON'T KNOW IF VENEERS WOULD FIT MY LIFESTYLE.

If you want veneers, there are certain precautions you can take in order to preserve the integrity of the procedure. For those who suffer from teeth

grinding, we can fabricate a special night guard that helps prevent your veneers from damage. It is also recommended that you wear a mouth guard when playing sports, as the veneers can break off like any natural teeth.

REMEMBER ...

Alas, a stable bite may make or break — literally — a successful veneer case. With our TScan® technology, we can accurately stabilize your bite to maximize the longevity and results. When you ask your dentist about veneers, we will evaluate your bite before deciding if they are a viable option for you.

Over the past 32 years Dr. Becker has placed many thousands of successful veneer cases with thrilled patients who had no idea how much difference veneers could make for them! Make an appointment with us if you think veneers might be right for you!

Nip It in the Bud A Renewed Look at Preventative Oral Care

Dr. Becker has long been known for his proactive approach to dentistry. Research now verifies the benefits this approach has to you the patient!

We are all familiar with the adage "Prevention is the best medicine," and dentists, doctors, and medical professionals in every field stress this with their patients. When it comes to oral health, and health in general, preventative care can make all the difference. Not only can preventative care lead to better overall health, it can lower health care-related costs in the future.

When it comes to oral care, the results of preventative care are impressive. A seven-year study spearheaded by the University of Sydney in Australia confirmed the aforementioned truism. Originally published in December, 2015, the study examined 1,000 patients at 22 dental practices around Australia.

Researchers compared two groups of patients: those who had "drill and fill" treatment (they had two or more cavities per year, plus fillings) and those who

took preventative measures. The preventative patients received high-concentration fluoride varnish treatments from their dentists, regularly brushed and flossed, and limited their intake of sugary foods and beverages.

The results of the study weren't surprising. The group of patients who focused on preventative oral care saw their risk of developing tooth decay fall by 30–50 percent. In addition, patients who were considered at high risk for developing tooth decay, but who had improved their oral care, saw their risk drop by a staggering 80 percent!

The lead researcher of the study, Professor Wendell Evans, concluded that, in many cases, tooth decay had the potential to be stopped and reversed, if not outright prevented. When early signs of tooth decay are spotted, it can be targeted. Extra effort can be placed on controlling the decay, ensuring it doesn't progress to the point where a filling becomes necessary. All it takes is a deliberate approach to care, treatment, and lifestyle.

This study is great news for people who hate the idea of getting a filling, whether that antipathy stems from the procedure itself or the resulting medical costs. It also confirms what many dentists have long reminded patients: You can't beat prevention when it comes to maintaining a healthy smile.



One-Pan Mexican Quinoa

This healthy, tasty, filling dish is a cinch to make on a busy weeknight. And cleanup's a breeze!

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeno, minced
- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 cup corn kernels, frozen, canned, or roasted
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 avocado, halved, seeded, peeled, and diced
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves

Directions

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and jalapeno and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Stir in quinoa, vegetable broth, beans, tomatoes, corn, chili powder, and cumin; season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil; cover, reduce heat and simmer until quinoa is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Stir in avocado, lime juice, and cilantro.
3. Serve immediately.

Recipe adapted from DamnDelicious.net.

Laughing Gas

