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## How Farmers Grow Those Giant Pumpkins

*Forklifts and cranes may be used mainly for construction work, but every fall, thousands of backyard gardeners use them as gardening tools – or rather, harvesting tools – for their largest single crop.*

Massive pumpkins aren't practical, but they can become a minor tourist attraction in your hometown, and even win a few thousand bucks if they're really huge. However, with the time and effort it takes to get them that big, farmers aren't in it for the money. They're in it for the glory.

Growing these monstrous fruits (yes, they are technically fruits) is kind of like breeding a racehorse. It takes practice, cultivation, and even good genes. Competitive growers will often purchase the seeds of the previous year's champions for their plant. After preparing the soil to make it extra fertile, they'll plant the pumpkin in late winter or early spring.

Before the gourd starts growing, flowers on the plant need to be pollinated. Farmers will usually take it upon themselves to pollinate, using pollen from plants with proven genetic

lines. Winning pumpkins usually claim their "father" plant and "mother" seed, like racehorses.

Growing a great pumpkin is practically a full-time job, with some farmers reporting spending 40 hours a week on it. Using heated soil, installing fences to reduce wind, adding sand, and other specific cultivation techniques give the pumpkin a fighting chance to grow into a monster. But, in the end, there's an element of luck.

The competitive growing industry is getting bigger (pun intended). In 1979, the largest pumpkin on record was 438 pounds. Since 2008, the world record has been broken every year. The reigning heavyweight champion was grown in Germany last year, weighing in at 2,623 pounds. That's the weight of a 2018 Toyota Yaris or 1,748 standard pumpkin pies.



### Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. We want to take this opportunity to remember those lost and support those brave women who have won or are still battling this disease. Come by our office in October and pick up your free awareness wristband to show your support.

### Blessing Bags!

Blessing Bags! There was such an outpouring of patients wanting to help distribute our blessing bags last year, and we are excited to announce we will be doing it again. Keep on the lookout for announcements of when they will be available to pick up!

### Dental Hygiene Month

In keeping with Dental Hygiene Month, we are looking at participating in a Halloween candy buyback. This is where you and your children or grandchildren can bring in your Halloween candy and we will buy it. All candy and proceeds will go to overseas military.

### Congratulations!

Congratulations to our hygienist, Janelle and her husband, Tyler, on their big news! Baby Page will be arriving late February. Please join us in congratulating them!

## Like Father, Like Daughter

When I was young, I wasn't afraid of the dental office. After all, the dentist was my dad, and I was regularly at the office. It didn't hurt that Dad was an exceptionally skilled dentist, so I never worried when I was the person in the chair. Even then, as a young child, I could see myself doing what my dad does.

Now, I'm in my 20s, and that dream remains. I'm currently at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and will graduate in a few months with my undergraduate degree. Then, I will pursue the long process of applying to dental school to become a dentist like my father.

Being a dentist is a dream I've had since I was 5 years old. Dad would bring home models to work on, and I was fascinated by it all. For a while, I was enticed by veterinary studies; I knew I wanted to medically help others, whether it was a person or an animal. But the more I watched Dad, the stronger I felt that I didn't want to do anything else but dentistry.

For the last five summers, I've interned here at Howard County Smiles. In a way, I felt like I already grew up here. Being a part of the team has been the learning experience of a lifetime. It's very different than other dental offices I've visited with friends. I've spent plenty of time in waiting rooms, whether for a dentist, a doctor, or other professional, and it's all the same – but not here. Howard County Smiles is different. We make everyone feel like they're the only patients and focus solely on them. We start with a tour of the office and a welcome gift for every new patient to help them feel welcome and at home. And we focus on them individually during their visit.

We have several multigenerational patients who have been with us from the beginning. Even my



old babysitter has a couple of young boys who are patients. It's fun to see my dad joke with them and help them relax. I love that people feel comfortable enough to trust us with their family, friends, and even children and grandchildren.

My dad's business practices certainly add to the experience. He only sees one patient at a time, so they get his undivided attention. He stays up to date on all the latest technology, so he can offer unique services like same-day crowns, Invisalign and TMJ treatments. When I think about what kind of dentist I want to be, I have the perfect role model right in front of me. Dad has been a pioneer, always thinking outside the box. I want to be a dentist like that.

Interning in such a special office environment has really helped me get through school. This last year, I was struggling, like most college students with upper-level classes. They say that final year of the pre-dental program is supposed to weed out those who can't handle it. I'll admit, I came close to doubting whether I could do dentistry. However, when I went back to the office for the summer, I was invigorated by the work. I learned more than I had any previous summer and began to see my potential life's work. I went back the next semester with all the vigor I needed to finish strong.

Over the next year, I'll take the Dental Admission Test and select a dental school to get my degree. It'll be a stressful and exciting time. Though I have many learning experiences ahead of me, I'm most grateful for the education and example of my father and his amazing staff.

*- Breanna Becker*



# Extracurricular Overload



AS SCHOOL STARTS UP AGAIN, SO DO SPORTS, AND YOUR KIDS' EXTRACURRICULAR AMBITIONS PILE UP LIKE THE FALLING AUTUMN LEAVES.

Managing their schedules can seem impossible, but don't let yourself get burned out. Here are some tips on how to stay sane in the midst of the extracurricular whirlwind.

Consolidate all your scheduling, jotting, and activity-tracking strategies into one system. You can't afford to be scrawling

"Abby piano lesson rescheduled 9/21" on the first scrap of paper you come across. That doesn't mean you have to be hyperorganized, but it does mean that you need to keep your entire calendar in one place, whether that place is Google Calendar, a fridge whiteboard, or the old-fashioned standby: a calendar with a lighthouse on every page. Whichever system you choose, keep it updated. Its word is law.

Form parent alliances. It's vital that you and your partner coordinate availability and who's driving who when, but you should go further than that. Those soccer practices Jacob's going to? There are other teammates there, and those teammates have parents shuttling them around, just like you are. Set up carpools to manage scheduling conflicts between your kids and drastically reduce the time you spend as a chauffeur.

Maintain balance. This might come as a surprise, but you will have to say no to your child every now and then. Sure, simultaneous baseball, football, and soccer seasons might seem healthy and fun for your kid, but you need to consider your own needs, as well. Many parents give their children free rein over what to choose, but limit activities to one or two per season. Make sure you weigh each child's needs equally, and keep the rules the same for each of them.

## Veneers vs. Bonding

We're asked this question all the time: What is the difference between veneers and dental bonding, and which is better? Depending on your needs, you want one or the other. But the best way to explain that is to define both of them and explain the pros and cons.

### Veneers

Veneers are thin shells of porcelain that cover the front of your teeth, like a thin artificial fingernail. Their mission is to cover up gaps between teeth and hide crooked, misshapen, or stained teeth. The procedure takes some time. A dentist needs to remove some enamel to allow for the added thickness of veneers. Then, a molded image is taken and used to match the veneers exactly to the shape of your teeth.

It's almost impossible to tell the difference between veneers and natural teeth, and they resist staining from coffee, tea, wine, and smoking. The only downside is that they are a bit pricier because they cover the tooth in a full ceramic material and have to be custom made and sometimes meant to cover multiple teeth.

### Bonding

Dental bonding, however, has a little more finesse. This cosmetic technique uses a composite resin to mask imperfections in your teeth. A dentist uses a resin that is matched to the exact color of your teeth (not transparent) and applies it freehand.

This is an easier option for those who have minor imperfections and repairs, as opposed to



those who want to make changes to the whole tooth or more than one tooth. However, the bonding doesn't protect the teeth the way veneers do and they are prone to staining and breakdown over time.

Which is a better option for you? We're here to help you decide. After a thorough examination of your teeth, we can help you decide which option is better for your cosmetic needs. Make an appointment with Dr. Becker for a consult and discuss your options!

## National Dental Hygiene Month Do You Know the Daily 4?

October is one of the biggest months for candy consumption. How appropriate that it also happens to be National Dental Hygiene Month! (Coincidence? Probably not.) This year we will be participating in a Halloween Candy Buy Back program. Look for more details to come!

For the last several years, the American Dental Hygienists Association (ADHA) has found an unlikely ally to help promote the importance of oral health this month. Wrigley, the brand responsible for Juicy Fruit, Extra, and Orbit gum, among others, has used their Wrigley Oral Health Program to promote what they call the "Daily 4," or four daily actions to help keep your teeth and gums healthy:

1. Brushing teeth twice a day
2. Flossing daily
3. Rinsing with mouthwash daily
4. Chewing sugar-free gum

Studies have shown that chewing sugar-free gum after eating and drinking on the go fosters saliva stimulation, plaque acid neutralization, and tooth strengthening. It's not a substitute for brushing your teeth, but it is a nice practice to help your teeth during the day.

When it comes to proactive self-care, tooth decay and gum disease are 100 percent preventable. Unfortunately, 40 percent of children suffer from tooth decay by age 5. These four daily steps will prevent disease, save money in the dentist's chair, and improve your smile.

All month, you can help us celebrate the work of dental hygienists — including our wonderful hygienist, Janelle — by starting a conversation about good oral health and doing the Daily



For more information, check out National Dental Hygiene Month on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

## Laughing Gas



## Winning Apple Crisp

### Ingredients

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup rolled oats
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 4 cups chopped, peeled apples
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Vanilla ice cream, optional

### Directions

1. Heat the oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, combine the first four ingredients. Cut in butter until crumbly. Press half of mixture into a greased 2½ quart baking dish or a 9-inch square baking pan. Cover with apples.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch, water, and vanilla. Bring to a boil; cook and stir 2 minutes or until thick and clear. Pour over apples. Sprinkle with remaining crumb mixture.
3. Bake 60–65 minutes or until apples are tender. Serve warm, with ice cream if desired.

(Recipe courtesy of tasteofhome.com.)

The cobwebs in my house just became decorations! Thanks Halloween!



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