



A Practice Dream Takes Flight

Dr. Heather Maze finally builds the practice she's always envisioned



PRACTICE PROFILE

DENTAL PRACTICE

Blue Heron Dentistry
Akron, Ohio

Heather Maze, DDS

OFFICE

Square feet: 4,500

OPERATORY EQUIPMENT

- CEREC® 3D MC XL CAD/CAM system
- A-dec Preference ICC Sterilization Center
- Midmark M-11 sterilizers
- SciCan Statim Autoclave
- Miele Thermal Disinfectant
- A-dec chairs, stools, delivery and dispensing units, cabinetry, treatment consoles, lights and handpieces
- Schick digital sensors
- PLANMECA ProOne digital pan
- PLANMECA Intra intraoral X-rays
- DigitalDoc intraoral cameras
- Air Techniques compressor and vacuum
- EagleSoft practice management and clinical software
- Patterson hardware
- CAESY Enterprise System and Smile Channel
- Porter Vanguard Manifold, Desk Model

This practice is a Patterson Advantage™ Gold member

Blue Heron Dentistry sits on a secluded wooded lot outside of Akron, Ohio. Its peaceful setting is home to Dr. Heather Maze's new 4,500-square-foot practice and the area's beloved bird, the Great Blue Heron, for which the practice is named.

With encouragement from her Patterson team and financial advice from Mercer, in February 2008 Dr. Maze's dream of opening a state-of-the-art practice came to fruition. From a spacious floor plan to the latest equipment and technology – all set within a brand-new building – Dr. Maze delivers to her patients a high level of care in a first-class setting.

Putting Down Roots

Ever since she was a 12-year-old girl in braces, Dr. Maze has known she wanted to be a dentist. By the time she graduated from The Ohio State University's College of Dentistry, she was eager to start practicing general and cosmetic dentistry. She earned her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 1994 and in 1999 bought into an established practice founded by a doctor who was gradually phasing into retirement. "He was known as a 'dentist's dentist,'" she said. "I felt blessed to be a part of his practice."

It was there that Dr. Maze realized her love for cosmetic dentistry as well as family care. "I like to develop lifelong relationships with my patients," she said. "I'm very detailed, very particular and I have a very high standard. I want to be able to give my patients the best care I can give them."





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From the beginning, Dr. Maze worked hard to determine the best treatment solutions for her patients. “I have patients get involved in making their treatment decisions. I never base treatment on what I’m going to get out of it, it’s always based on what’s best for the patient.”

The practice she joined, while reputed for dental excellence, was small, with no natural lighting. Also, while Dr. Maze enjoyed the mentorship and camaraderie of the owner/doctor, as he cut back on his hours, her schedule became more full and she found she had less time to spend at home with her three young children. While these factors began to weigh on her, she didn’t yet have the vision or resources to build new.

In 2005, Dr. Maze’s long-time Patterson sales representative and good friend Doug Blunt, who also is her patient, invited her and her husband, Chris, to attend a Mercer Leadership Seminar with him in San Francisco. Blunt felt that it would be helpful for professionals to advise her on the proper financial foundation for a new building.

When they returned from the seminar, the couple was inspired to start saving money for a new practice. A year later, Dr. Maze brought her entire staff to Florida for another Mercer seminar. There she and her team were recognized for the practice’s recent growth, and she received additional advice and encouragement to build her own practice. She didn’t act immediately, though. “The new office talks went on for years. I would meet with Doug and the guys from Patterson, and we’d talk about planning and preparing, but I didn’t jump right into it,” Dr. Maze said.

What finally inspired her to act was when, in 2007, Dr. Maze’s partner put up for sale the building where their practice and three other businesses were housed. She knew she’d either have to buy the building and gut it, build a new office or continue to lease elsewhere.

Dr. Maze met with her accountant, received coaching from Blunt, as well as Mercer, and did a lot of soul-searching. She committed to proceeding with a new build, only to learn that her husband had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. With his full support, however, she decided to move forward with the new building.



Before the Build

Dr. Maze had been a longtime Patterson customer and purchased everything from supplies to equipment, but one of Blunt's most important contributions to the new build wasn't something she could purchase – it was his assurance that she'd made the right decision. "One of the things Doug brought to the new practice was the inspiration to do it. He always gave me the support I needed," Dr. Maze said.

Blunt explained that the trust Dr. Maze placed in him and Patterson was one reason he was so dedicated to getting her new practice right. "[Dr. Maze and her husband] fully trusted us. We had a lot of responsibility on our hands. I still feel a responsibility to be a big support, because they have that deep level of trust," he said.

Since it had been her dream for so long, Dr. Maze had very specific ideas about the new practice. She already had selected the lot on which she wanted to build the new practice. "Every day on my drive to and from work, I passed a beautiful wooded lot," she said. "I always said to myself, that would be a great place to have a dental office – very quiet and serene."

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The setting itself grew to play an even greater role when she used the area's resident bird, the Great Blue Heron, for inspiration. At the Mercer seminars she attended, Dr. Maze learned the importance of having a vision to guide her practice, from patient treatment plans to long-term financial goals. Great Blue Herons, which are known for their acute vision, became a symbol – visually illustrated in the practice's logo and as bronze statues throughout the office – for Dr. Maze's practice philosophy: to help patients achieve the highest level of oral health; to elevate patients' expectations of dentistry and deliver optimal care; to develop lifelong relationships with patients; to remain dedicated to achieving the highest level of education in the dental field; and to provide a partnership of goodwill demonstrated by the care given.

Fully Equipped From the Start

Blunt pulled together a Patterson team who met regularly with Dr. Maze and her husband to discuss the new practice. Up-to-date equipment and technology, enough operatories for future growth, an open floor plan, expert interior design that reflected her personal style and natural lighting were top of her wish list.

To help ease the transition into the new practice for her staff, Dr. Maze converted her practice management software to Patterson's EagleSoft before the move. "With all the new technology coming in to the new practice, I knew it was going to be overwhelming for the staff, so I tried to be proactive and make the move a little easier on everyone," she said.

The Patterson team devised a floor plan to increase efficiency starting with the operatories, four on either side of the





walk-through laboratory and sterilization center. The practice is laid out in a rectangle, which makes it easily navigable for staff and patients. And the increased number of operatories solved the space crunch of the other practice. Blunt said, "The office can move from treatment to hygiene without too many steps. It's efficient, time-wise." And, rather than having one or two favorite operatories as she did before, Dr. Maze has eight identical rooms.

Though she didn't need to outfit all eight operatories at once, Dr. Maze felt that if she didn't invest in and equip them right away, it might never happen. "How many times do people say, 'We'll do it later,' but they never do? I didn't want that to happen with my practice," she said. "I just wanted to give my patients the best care from the start."

The operatories are fully equipped with A-dec, including 12 o'clock consoles with dual entry, chairs and stools, delivery units and handpieces. Each operatory also contains Schick digital X-ray, PLANMECA Intra intraoral X-rays, as well as a computer,

Our patients love the same-day results of their restorations. — Dr. Heather Maze

monitor and TV screen, all linked to patient records with seamless integration via EagleSoft.

Her A-dec sterilization center is top-of-the-line and includes a Miele Thermal Disinfectant Center. There's also a water filtration system just for the dental water lines. In the laboratory, Dr. Maze installed a CEREC® MC XL milling unit, which she and her staff use almost daily to complete restorations on-site, including onlays and crowns. "Our patients love the same-day results of their restorations," she said. "The fact that the patient doesn't have to take an impression, wear a provisional or come back for the seating of the restoration just amazes them."

Looking Ahead

Dr. Maze's long-term vision is to bring an associate on board, which would allow her to rearrange her work schedule in order to spend more time with her family. A partner also would enable her to dedicate a day

in the office each week to take care of paperwork, administrative tasks or case planning for in-depth procedures.

She's very aware that the practice's success comes not just from a new facility and how she might grow it, but from the loyalty of her patients. For years Dr. Maze has operated the Cavity-Free Club, an internal program that rewards children for good dental health with a monthly gift card drawing. And referrals from her adult patients typically earn them a gift card to Starbucks.

By getting involved in community events, Dr. Maze also is marketing the new practice. She recently sponsored a local elementary school's Blue Heron Days festival and also is on a committee for the American Heart Association's "Go Red for Women" initiative. She's a big believer in the positive connection between good oral health and good heart health.

The biggest challenge that Dr. Maze faced once she opened the new practice was going from the mentality of leasing to that of owning. "Someone has to mow the lawn and have the trash picked up. There were all sorts of building expenses that I didn't have at the old office that I have now," she said.

Though it took time for Dr. Maze to make the leap from associate to owner, she always knew it would work. Now she's well on her way to spending more time with her husband and young children. "I'm a very goal-oriented person, and by golly, if I have my mind set on something I'm going to have it." **PT**

Go online now to www.pattersontoday.com to view an exclusive video of Dr. Maze's practice.

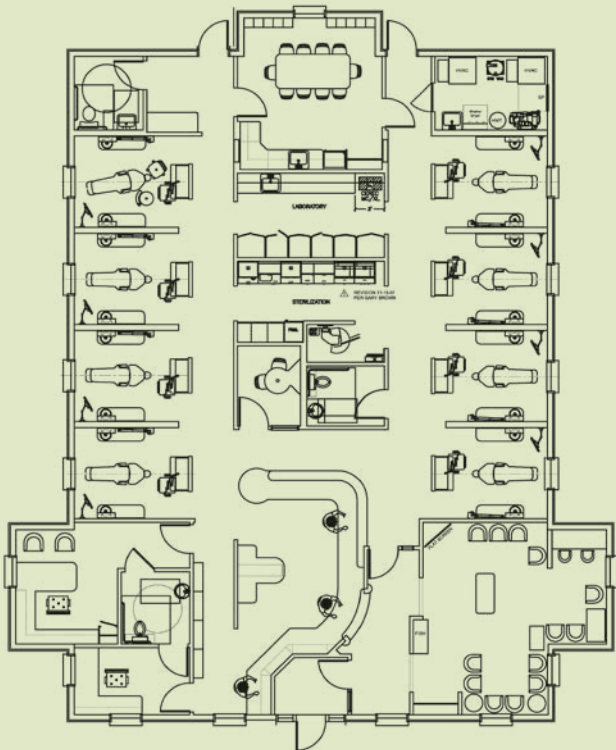
Designed to Last

At one-and-a-half stories tall and with high ceilings, crown molding and plantation shutters, the practice has the ambience of a hotel or spa when you walk in, said Patterson Sales Representative Doug Blunt. Dr. Maze hired a renowned area interior designer for help executing her vision. Everything is meticulously color-coordinated in her pale-yellow and pale-green palette, from the wallpaper and carpet to the operator's A-dec chairs to the stitching on her lab coat.

To reflect the influence of the Great Blue Heron on her practice, Dr. Maze installed bronze statues of the bird throughout the office. She stumbled upon the statues at a West Virginia art gallery where a group of artists had convened. The birds caught her attention, and only after she had purchased a number of them did she find out that the artist was a former dentist.

The practice's top-notch equipment, interior design and pristine location have reinvigorated her love of dentistry and reinforced her decision to build.

"We have a soothing atmosphere, and the scenery! Every operatory has a big window that looks outside. It's such a dramatic difference from where I was before. I just love it here."



From left to right:
Gary Brown, Adam Dorsey, Mike Jambor, Dr. Heather Maze,
Doug Blunt, Dale Murdoch, Rick Schwarz

PATTERSON TEAM

- Mike Jambor, *Branch Manager*
- Doug Blunt, *Sales Representative*
- Dale Murdoch, *Equipment Specialist*
- Rick Schwarz, *Equipment Specialist*
- Gary Brown, *Service Technician*
- Adam Dorsey, *Service Technician*