



PRACTICE PROFILE

DENTAL PRACTICE

The Dentists at Houston Westchase
Houston, Texas

Brett McRay, DDS
Heather Robbins, DDS

OFFICE

3,334 square feet
2 furnished operatories, 8 total

EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

- A-dec 511 Chairs
- A-dec 541 12 O'Clock Delivery Systems
- A-dec Assistant's Stools
- A-dec Central Consoles
- A-dec Doctor's Stools
- A-dec LED Dental Lights
- A-dec Preference ICC Sterilization Center
- A-dec Treatment Consoles
- A-dec/W&H Handpieces
- Porter Digital MXR Flowmeter Package
- Porter Vanguard Manifold System
- RamVac Bison Vacuum
- RamVac Osprey Compressor
- Sirona Heliodont Intraoral X-ray
- Sopro Life Intraoral Cameras





Same Page, New Story

Husband-and-wife dentists Brett McRay and Heather Robbins have long shared a philosophy. Now they share a practice, too.

When McRay, DDS, and Robbins, DDS, decided to launch their first practice together, they didn't take the decision lightly. Nor did they make it overnight. In fact, they spent years honing their skills as associates in other practices before they decided to practice on their own.

"We knew that our ethics, our integrity, our chairside manner and our skillsets were well aligned to practice together," McRay said. "The chemistry, from a technical and professional standpoint, existed. We knew that if we embarked on this together, being entrepreneurs at heart, we could make it work. That's what we did."

That's what they did eventually. They didn't rush it, though. They carefully weighed their options, diving deeply into research about the pros and cons of buying existing practices versus launching one of their own.

The way McRay and Robbins see it – and it's fair to say that singularly, because when it comes to their practice, they truly share a vision – the care they took in making each and every decision was instrumental to the practice's ultimate success. That includes their key partnerships with the >>





people that helped them along the way. Among them, their broker, architect, office designer and Patterson Dental Houston Branch team: Territory Representative Monetta Reyes and Equipment Specialist Skip Fortune.

A budding partnership

Rewind a few years, to a pair of first-year dental students at the University of Texas School of Dentistry in Houston. McRay and Robbins gravitated toward each other, becoming study partners right away. They quickly realized that they shared a philosophy about dentistry, among other things. "We have since joked that if they had an award for the longest-running couple in dental school, we would have won it," McRay said. "We could tell right away that first year, we were a good fit. On top of that, our goals and our treatment philosophies were well aligned."

Even with everything they shared, after graduating from dental school, they were still on separate professional paths. Robbins – whose mother is a longtime hygienist and whose godmother is a well-respected cosmetic dentist in the Houston area – had been around dentistry for as long as she could remember, and working as a dental assistant since the age of 15. "I was brought up around dentistry and I knew exactly what I wanted in terms of a business," Robbins said. "I knew what I was looking for and I was ready to start practicing."

While Robbins landed an associateship with a top cosmetic practice, McRay was focused on continuing to gather knowledge and experience. He stayed in school for another year as a general dentistry resident, and wanted to expand his knowledge of specialty procedures that he could employ as a general practitioner later. "I wanted to have some extra tools in the toolkit, so to speak. I wanted to learn more advanced training in sedation, special needs, O.R. hospital dentistry – truly comprehensive dentistry," McRay said. "Afterward, I ventured out and became an associate, too, for another practice. At that point, we both had a plan for the future, and we were assuming we would stay on separate paths."

Of course, then, life happened. Robbins' anticipated purchase of the practice in which she was an associate started to look less promising. McRay, too, saw his plans changing.

"Every dentist is an entrepreneur, whether you're building from the ground up or buying into something," he said. "We decided then through several misfires of purchasing an established practice we didn't want to adopt an existing culture, we wanted to simply create it. We then knew we were always destined to found our own practice together."

A three-pronged approach

To state the obvious: If you're starting a dental practice, you need a space for it. That's not groundbreaking information. McRay and Robbins recognized the importance of a space – a thoughtfully constructed, conveniently located, comfortable space – to provide quality dental care.

But that's not the only important factor in establishing their practice. In fact, McRay and Robbins view it as part of a three-pronged approach to providing meaningful, comprehensive dental care. To them, the space may have been the least important prong.

"It doesn't start with the slab, it starts with the relationships," McRay said. "For us to make the decision to build our own practice, it's definitely been a risk. But we love dentistry and we're passionate about trying to be the best we can be at what we do. There are a few components to that, but all of them add up to better goodwill and better predictability in case acceptance and treatment planning."

In addition to the space, McRay and Robbins recognized two other vital components to practice success: a full team of dedicated, caring professionals; and educated dentists whose drive is matched only by their compassion. The first faces patients see, and the people whom they have the most contact with in the practice, are usually team members and not the doctors. That's part of why McRay and Robbins feel so strongly about the value of the team.

"You have to have a great team," Robbins said. "Patients identify with your team and the team makes an impact on how your patients view the practice before you do. The way we see it, in order to provide world-class customer service, we need a world-class team. We were very picky in selecting our team, which is phenomenal because they embrace our philosophy and we make a lot of collective decisions together." >>



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Then, there's the matter of knowledgeable, passionate doctors. McRay notes that part of the value of having knowledge is that each doctor should have distinctly different knowledge than the other. If they are cognizant of only the exact same attributes of dentistry, then they aren't bringing unique aspects to patient care. That's where Patterson Territory Representative Monetta Reyes said the two dentists truly separated their practice.

"My clients have a unique and incredible opportunity to build upon each other's strengths," Reyes said. "As a team they divide between them the procedures that they are passionate about. Dr. McRay enjoys endo, oral surgery, and implants. Dr. Robbins is incredible with restorative cosmetics – ortho and veneers are her passion. Because of the range of procedures, the patients are able to stay in the practice rather than being referred outside for treatment. It's world-class service with a personal touch. Patients are treated like family here."

Keeping everything possible in-house fit perfectly with the philosophy that the dentists shared: providing elite, comprehensive care. "The bottom line is providing the best care to patients," Robbins said. "One of the ways we do that is by offering all the different types of services under one roof – from dental implants, to root canals, to full-mouth restorative and cosmetic cases, to complete orthodontics – with an array of sedation options to tailor-fit each case. We take the idea of comprehensive dentistry seriously and that's something that's very important to us – that the patient feels comfortable and can always come to us regardless of what they need."

The meaning of the space

The space may not have been the most important piece of the doctors' three-pronged approach, but it was vitally important nonetheless. The first step was determining where they would like to locate the practice they would establish.

"We put a lot of thought into where we wanted to go, and we located this area in a professional building," Robbins said. "There are a number of office buildings around us, which means our patient base is people who live in that area, and also those who just work there and live in other parts of town."

What McRay and Robbins liked about the latter portion of the patient base is that it had additional opportunity. When a patient who works in the area visits the practice and sees the type of dentistry they provide, they can bring their family from another area to experience it, too. That led to the next step: creating an office that is worthy of bringing your family across town. There were a number of factors McRay and Robbins considered.

“When you walk into a dental office, there are preconceived notions that it smells like a dental office, or it looks like a dental office,” McRay said. “When you walk into our office, we wanted something elegant and soothing that would help our patients relax. If you feel like you’re in a five-star setting, you expect a five-star treatment. We feel like we have achieved that with the help of everyone from our architect, to our designer, to Patterson.”

As part of the five-star experience, Robbins said colors, finishes and technology were important elements. Chiefly important also was the layout and patient flow of the space. They wanted a space with open bays for patient comfort and closed suites for patient privacy, each where appropriate. They wanted a patient flow with separate patient check-in and check-out areas for privacy and professionalism on patients’ behalf. With wide hallways, clean lines and details that were meticulously selected, the practice “gives off a feeling not only of exceptional technology, but also extraordinary patient care,” Reyes said.

Patients have loved the practice and it has proven to be everything McRay, Robbins and all who worked on it hoped it would be. Beyond that, it has garnered additional recognition. Wells Fargo Practice Finance holds an annual Dental Office Design Competition with a number of award categories. The Dentists at Houston Westchase was named the 2015 Dental Office Design of the Year – Small Practice. Wells Fargo lists the following criteria as its basis for judging: “Best overall facility as evidenced by functional design, efficient interior space planning and appropriate integration of dental equipment and technology.”

It was high praise for McRay, Robbins and the practice they created – not bad for a couple of dentists who hadn’t intended to work together. And while they were honored to receive the recognition, they’re not resting on their laurels. Every day is another opportunity to provide the best possible dental care to a new group of patients.

The longest-running couple in dental school just keeps on running. **PT**



From left to right:
Skip Fortune, Dr. Heather Robbins, Dr. Brett McRay and Monetta Reyes

PATTERSON TEAM

Tim Wagstaff, *General Manager*

Monetta Reyes, *Territory Representative*

Skip Fortune, *Equipment Specialist*

Bo Martin, *Service Technician*

Albert Martin, *Service Technician*

David Langley, *Office Designer*



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