



PRACTICE PROFILE

DENTAL PRACTICE

Carter Sledge Family Dentistry
Ridgeland, Miss.

Michael Carter, DMD
Catherine Sledge, DMD

OFFICE

Square feet: 3,800
6 operatories

EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

- A-dec 1601 Doctor's Stools
- A-dec 1622 Assistant's Stools
- A-dec 411 Dental Chairs
- A-dec 511 Dental Chairs
- A-dec 541 12 O'Clock Delivery Systems
- A-dec 561 Cuspidors w/Support Centers and Monitor Mounts


- A-dec Accessory Consoles
- Assistina Handpiece Maintenance System
- A-dec Central Consoles
- A-dec Dental Lights
- A-dec Preference ICC Sterilization Center
- A-dec Treatment Consoles
- A-dec/W&H Handpieces
- CEREC Bluecam AC
- CEREC MC XL
- Eaglesoft Practice Management Software
- Midmark M11 UltraClave Sterilizer
- Midmark PowerAir and PowerVac System
- Porter MXR-1 Flushmount Flowmeters
- Schick Elite Sensors
- Sirona XG 3D Ready Pan

This practice is a Patterson Advantage® Silver member.

Southern Comfort

A father and daughter team up to build a new practice and serve the changing needs of their community

When Michael Carter, DMD, began practicing dentistry in the 1970s in Jackson, Miss., patients were looking for a certain type of dental experience. His home-like 640-square-foot office with two private operatories was the perfect venue in which to build a client base in his adopted home. Friends of his wife – who is from Jackson – brought their children to him, he gained their trust, and soon he was well-known as a family dentist in town.



“I think it would be every father’s dream to have their son or daughter to come and work with them.”

— Dr. Michael Carter

Several years later, Dr. Carter moved into a 2,000-square-foot, four-operatory office, and it was in this practice atmosphere that his daughter, Catherine Sledge (née Carter), DMD, grew up. She frequently spent time at the practice during her formative years, but it took several years of college before she realized that dentistry was her calling as well as her father’s.

Sledge was attending the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) when she told her visiting parents about her plans to apply for dental school. “I said, ‘Are you crazy? It’s so difficult. I think it’s harder than medical school,’” Carter said. “But Catherine said, ‘No, I think I’ll go.’ Well, about three months after she started dental school, she called me and said how hard it was, but she persevered.”

The ability of dentists to have both a career and a family was appealing to Sledge. “Growing up I saw how Dad was able to have so much involvement in our family as opposed to, say, an emergency room

surgeon. He never missed a play, musical, soccer game,” she said. “Dentistry is such a family friendly profession.”

Catherine graduated in 2011 with a Doctorate of Dental Medicine from the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Throughout her time at school, she had thought about where to practice when she graduated, but kept returning to the idea of going into practice with her father. Carter didn’t pressure his daughter, just helped educate her on her options, including looking at practices for sale in the area.

“I certainly considered other opportunities in dental school but never wavered from wanting to be with him because I had seen what he does and thought it would be so much fun to work together. We have such a close relationship,” Sledge said. “I knew if I were working with him every day, I would have a great time doing it.”

Even two years after they opened their practice together, Carter still seems to be in awe of his daughter’s decision to go into business together. “I think it would be every father’s dream to have their son or daughter to come and work with them,” Carter said. “It’s a real honor that Catherine wanted to do that.”

A new home

As Catherine neared her graduation date from dental school, the doctors’ first order of business was to find space for a new office. Though Carter had kept up with dental technology during his 25 years in business – thanks to his relationship with Patterson Dental Territory Representative Martin Webb – his practice space was too small to comfortably accommodate two doctors.

A friend of Carter’s offered the doctors 4,500 square feet of space in a new shopping center in nearby Ridgeland. The suburb was growing, the >>



shopping center was situated on a major road through town, and the office space was vacant. In addition to its economic selling points, the doctors fell in love with the high ceilings inside and the grand entryway outside featuring double doors, a copper awning and an eye-catching clock tower.

Carter was apprehensive about the upgrade and leaving the practice where he'd worked for 25 years, but with Catherine's encouragement, took the plunge. "I was a little reluctant, being more 'old school,' but we have such a great trust in each other," Carter said. "Catherine said, 'Dad, it's time. We need to move.' If it had been anyone else, I don't know if I would have listened as intently or taken it to heart as I did."

The next decision was far easier for the doctors to make: selecting their office designer and equipment provider. Carter had been working with Patterson representative Martin Webb since the doctor was in dental school, and with Equipment Specialist Greg Bridges for 20 years. "It's always been a pleasure; they've always catered to our schedule. It's been a great relationship," Carter said of Patterson.

For Sledge, that relationship with Patterson gave her the ability to focus on her new career and building the new practice. "Being able to jump in and continue that working relationship has been really great," she said.

Bridges met frequently with the doctors to better understand their goals for the practice space. Together, they designed a 3,800-square-foot floor plan with six operatories and the option of an additional 700 square feet when needed. Patients enter through one door and exit through another, and most walk past the sterilization center and CEREC milling unit at the heart of the practice. When they're finished, patients can check out at one of two semi-private counters at the reception desk. While they are waiting for their appointment or their parents, children can play in the kids' cubby in the reception area, which features games, books and a television.

Bridges designed the private staff areas to be separated from the rest of the practice by a short hallway. Tucked in the back of the practice are two private offices, two restrooms and a staff lounge.

"Our vision for the practice was that we wanted to marry two things that can seem to be mutually exclusive," Sledge said. "Having an upscale, aesthetically





pleasing office that caters to patients who are interested in cosmetic work – we love full mouth restorations where people see such a huge and immediate difference in their smile – to make sure they felt pampered and relaxed here. But we love seeing whole families, too. That’s the heart of what we do.”

Establishing boundaries

Thanks to his nearly 20 years of experience in dentistry, Bridges was able to assess the particular requirements of Carter and Sledge’s office space and recommend equipment that would provide exactly what the doctors wanted. For instance, he recommended A-dec central cabinets for operator dividers, which enables them to add a future, seventh operator, if needed. (The extra space currently functions as the consultation room.)

“The flow has been great,” Sledge said. “The way we set it up allowed for some flexibility. And the office is set up so that [my dad and I] see each other a lot. It’s easy for us to do a consult with each other on a patient.”

“What makes me feel like a king is when she comes up and asks my opinions about how to do something,” Carter said. “We collaborate and bounce things off each other, and it’s just awesome.”

Bridges and Webb also took Carter and Sledge to the A-dec facility in Newberg, Ore, in order to see firsthand the equipment they were interested in purchasing. “Going to A-dec was very instrumental in helping us make our selections,” said Sledge. “Just by going out there and seeing how the equipment is made, learning the history of the company, gave us confidence in the company and the quality of the materials. And the attention paid to us was so personalized! We were able to try everything out.”

The doctors chose the same equipment in the same configurations for each operator, from the doctor’s chairs to the treatment consoles and handpieces. Coming to a decision on the makes and models of equipment was easier than selecting the finishes and colors, however.

Though they had agreed that the goal of the new practice space was to be like a relaxing oasis, Carter and Sledge had different ideas regarding how that would come to life. Carter leans more traditional in his design aesthetic, while Sledge prefers more modern design. >>



Ultimately, Carter let his daughter take the lead regarding the majority of the design elements. The end result is soft-white equipment with slate-gray chairs, surrounded by soft-gray walls and white-washed laminate wood flooring. (Carter is proud to say that he picked out the flooring.) Carter's wife/Sledge's mother and several friends painted the artwork that hangs throughout the office.

"We wanted it to be like a spa, very soothing, and every one of our patients say it's so relaxing in here. So it must have worked!" Carter said. "It makes me feel so good about our office and practice. It's further affirmation that we did the right thing at the right time."

Looking to the future

Carter has always considered the patient experience key to a successful practice, which meant not only treating patients well but treating them with the right tools and technologies. He was one of the first doctors in Mississippi to have CEREC digital impressioning, and he and Sledge continue to use CEREC every day to treat patients. New Schick Elite sensors are used to capture digital X-rays and all data is seamlessly integrated through Eaglesoft practice management software.

As part of the move, Carter and Sledge made the decision to upgrade Carter's panoramic X-ray to a Sirona XG 3D Ready unit. The unit allows the doctors the flexibility to purchase an upgrade to move their practice into 3D dentistry, a move they intend to make soon.

It is Carter's Patterson representative, Martin Webb, who has kept the doctor informed about the newest and best technologies for his practice since he began practicing dentistry. "Martin would always say, 'Doctor, if you get this new technology you will not regret it.' He's been right every time," Carter said.

Today, with Webb and the Patterson team's help, Carter and Sledge have the best of both worlds: a beautiful new practice space that is filled with the most innovative and up-to-date technology and equipment for the patients. **PT**



To watch a video of Carter Sledge Family Dentistry, scan this QR code with your smartphone.

If you don't have a QR code reader on your phone, there are free apps available for download. Once you've got your free app, point your phone's camera at the QR Code and you'll be taken to the video!

To learn more about
Carter Sledge Family Dentistry,
visit *cartersledgedental.com*.



From left to right:
Back row: Andy Daniel, Herman Hutson, Tom Lawrence, Michael Miles,
Debra Nichols, Martin Webb and Greg Bridges
Front row: Dr. Michael Carter and Dr. Catherine Sledge

PATTERSON TEAM

Tom Lawrence, *Branch Manager*
Martin Webb, *Territory Representative*
Greg Bridges, *Equipment Specialist*
Michael Miles, *Equipment Specialist*
Andy Daniel, *Service Technician*
Herman Hutson, *Service Technician*
Tim King, *Office Designer*
Debra Nichols, *Technology Advisor*



Visit *pattersontoday.com*
to take a virtual tour of this practice!