



CARING, LAUGHING & THRIVING

BY HOLLY KEAN | PHOTOS BY DOUG PECK

What do you get when you combine two easy-going dentists, a supportive staff that seamlessly works together and a culture that embraces kindness, hospitality and understanding? You get a thriving, warm practice full of sincere people who genuinely care about each patient and are satisfied with the high-quality level of dentistry that each patient receives. It's an easy picture to paint after visiting Perry & Tyler—A Family Dental Practice in Novato, California just north of San Francisco.

Dr. Perry is both easy to connect with and casual; his team even refers to him as McKell instead of Dr. Perry. "McKell is even-tempered, unselfish, a likeable guy and family oriented. And a good dentist. That's really what is behind this being such a successful practice, I think," says hygienist Janet Cubley.

Dr. Perry graduated from the University of the Pacific, School of Dentistry in 1989 and joined his father, Dr. Lynn Perry, in the family dental practice, in Novato not far from where the practice is currently located. A real honest-to-goodness family business, the two enjoyed working together for 12 years along with Dr. McKell's mother (and Dr. Lynn's wife) serving as the office manager and his sister working as Dr. McKell's dental assistant.

"I sort of walked into a partnership out of the shoot. It was really nice for me to have a mentor from the start. I essentially had an internship by working with my dad after I graduated."

As the child of a dentist, Dr. Perry didn't dream of following in his father's footsteps like some. He laughs as he reflects that. "I wasn't one of those 10-year-old kids who always knew he'd be a dentist."

During his undergraduate studies in biology, he worked in construction and was "a little bit torn" which direction he'd pursue. However, after doing well on the DAT, he was "off to the races" and entered dental school.

Dr. Eric R. Tyler (left) and Dr. McKell W. Perry (right).



Assistant Debbie Blake and Dr. McKell have been working together for 11 years.



RDA, Melissa Nuyens talking with Burkhart Account Manager Angela Casey.



Dr. Eric R. Tyler examines a patient

Dr. Perry is clear about what makes this practice a great one. "We really work to provide 'Golden Rule' dentistry here. We try to treat people as if they were our family members. Anything we do to treat patients, we would do for our family, our kids, our friends. We are not real sales people. If there are alternative treatments or cosmetic treatments that patients ask for, we love to do them but we don't push them on people. If people want to know about certain types of dentistry, procedures or alternatives, we talk about it—and not just from a monetary standpoint."

After 12 years of working with his son, Dr. Lynn and his wife retired, turning the practice over to Dr. McKell. By then, the practice had grown used to having two doctors in the office. It became clear when his father left that Dr. McKell would need to fill the vacancy in order to stay involved with his family as much as he had grown used to.

"I selfishly brought on a partner so I could spend more time with my family. We really try to stress that for everyone here. I'm in the twilight end of things with a senior in high school and one in college.

There are soccer games and dance recitals that I don't want to miss. Those things are very important to me. A big part of that was making sure the office was covered, the patients were covered and we both had time for our families," reflects Dr. Perry.

Enter Dr. Perry's partner, Dr. Eric Tyler who—like Dr. Perry—goes by his first name among the team.

Dr. Tyler graduated from the University of the Pacific, School of Dentistry in 2003 and completed a residency in advanced education in general dentistry at UCLA. after which he immediately began working at the practice after responding to a job posting at the Marin County Dental Society.

Starting at the practice was seamless by all accounts. Within just a few weeks, it seemed as if Dr. Tyler had been there for years.

In stark contrast to Dr. Perry, Dr. Tyler did aspire at a young age to become a dentist. "I loved my dentist and my orthodontist as a kid. I

was always fascinated by the work they did for people. Through the years, I just kept that focus."

Dr. Perry identified a few other benefits to having a second dentist in the practice. "With a partner, you get an instant second opinion. That's how it was with my father. If it's an involved treatment plan, there's usually a couple of different ways to approach it and Eric and I look at it from both perspectives and start bouncing ideas off of each other. Even with protocol or office issues, it's nice to be able to have another person to help make a decision."

Dr. Tyler reflects on advice from dental school with a snicker, "They cautioned against partnerships. They basically said associate for someone, buy a practice or start your own but don't join a practice as a partner. They just made it sound like a lot of practices had failed very quickly because the doctors did not have the same communication style or philosophy of care for patients." But this office clearly does not follow that pattern. "That's never been a problem here. We do see eye-to-eye on how

to treat our patients. I think that's why it's worked out so well over the years," Dr. Tyler explains.

Like Dr. Perry, Dr. Tyler's top-most priority is patient care. "We think about treatment planning as if our patients were family and [we] are just open and honest with people about what we're recommending for them. We're relatively conservative in what we recommend and I think that goes a long way with patients. They trust us and they see that we're treating them like we would our family."

The staff is on the same page when it comes to patient care.

"This group is great with change," says hygienist Megan Currie. "We'll have a meeting to talk about a new regulation or a change, we learn about it, we get educated and then it gets implemented that afternoon. We all look at it the same way; everything should be at a high standard. After all, our own families come here. Our friends come here."



"We're real friends. We care about each other," says office manager Vicki Baker pictured here with Dr. Eric Tyler.



Hygienist Ellen Richter works on a patient.

“We try to treat people as if they were our family members. Anything we do to treat patients, we would do for our family, our kids, our friends. We are not real sales people. If there are alternative treatments or cosmetic treatments that patients ask for, we love to do them but we don't push them on people. If people want to know about certain types of dentistry, procedures or alternatives, we talk about it—and not just from a monetary standpoint.”

Granted, things can't always be positive. Front office manager Vicki Baker shares how she handles the occasional contentious patient. "Sometimes you just have to let it roll off your back. You don't want a heated situation that you may have been in ten minutes ago to overshadow the experience of a new patient who's walking in the door. You definitely don't want that to be the first impression that they get from the practice."

True to form for this practice, Dr. Tyler's priorities are reflected in his personal approach to educating patients. "I've always liked to take the time to explain why they need or would benefit from a specific procedure and to explain it in simple terms. The response I get from patients is, 'Thanks for taking the time to explain this to me.' I think you lose people by talking in the technical sense too often."

There's no doubt the office of Drs. Tyler and Perry is a well-loved place to work. Most of the employees have been at the practice for more than 10 years and many first met Dr. Perry as patients themselves. It's clear that good vibes in the office are felt by each and every person here. Dr. Tyler points out, "I love coming to work every day. The patients are great. The staff is great. We have a lot of

fun. We make sure we do things outside of the office to make sure office camaraderie is building."

"It's really comfortable here," says Mary Carminati who has worked at the practice for almost 14 years. "There's a lot of laughing. People love it and it feels like family. I think that's why patients stay here for so long."

For Vicki, a 13-year employee, it's an easy formula for success. "We're all friends. We all care about each other," she says. "We're always trying to have a good time. If our patients can join in on that, it relaxes them."


The way this group enjoys their work, their patients and one another is clear.



PICTURED (LEFT TO RIGHT): BACK ROW: Melissa Nuyens, RDA, Megan Currie RDH, Mary Carminati, Front Desk/RDA, Debbie Blake, RDA 17, Janet Cubley, RDH, Vicki Baker, Office manager, Tania McMullin, RDA. **FRONT ROW:** Dr. Eric R. Tyler, Dr. McKell W. Perry. **NOT PICTURED:** Ellen Richter, RDH, Katherine Fong, RDH, Lisa Strong, Collections.

"Every so often we'll get dental assistant interns and they'll say how great it is here," notes dental assistant Tania McMullin. She laughs, almost knowing what their next thought is. "I just tell them, 'No, you can't have our jobs. We're staying. We're not leaving.'"

Having a staff that's been together for a while makes a difference too. "We've all been here for a really long time. I saw a patient sitting in the waiting room that I hadn't seen for a while and when I said hi to him. He stopped and paused for a minute. Then he asked, 'Do you ever have any turn over around here?' I'm still here!" laughs Megan.

It's easy to see how the community of Novato is in good hands with the office of Perry and Tyler. Patient care is at its best when well-skilled, easy going dentists, attentive and thorough hygienists, confident and vital dental assistants and friendly, up beat front desk staff focus together on one central priority. It's that very focus that makes many patients continue returning to the practice year after year. Dr. Tyler sums it up simply, "I want to go to sleep at night knowing that I've taken care of people the best that I possibly can." 

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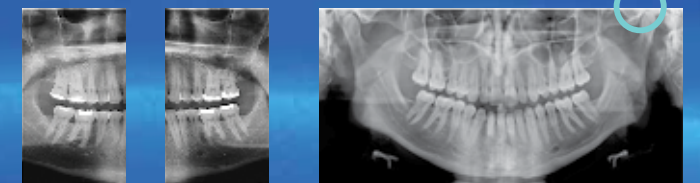
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