

## COMBINING CAREER AND COMMUNITY INTO A SUCCESSFUL DENTAL PRACTICE

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For some people, dentistry is a calling. It was for Ricky L. Farmer, DMD. Dr. Farmer is the owner of Lake Pointe Dental Care in Somerset, Ky. He believes in his purpose, his patients and team, and his community, while living by his motto “Delivering contemporary, comprehensive, compassionate care.”

Farmer said he was always drawn to doing something that would help people look and feel better, be healthier and allow them to succeed in different aspects of their lives. “Being good with fine details by using my hands, wanting to be creative, having a knack for design, symmetry and esthetics, combined with a passion to help people, are what I think dentistry really married all together for me,” he said.

Farmer received his undergraduate degree in biology and chemistry from Lindsey Wilson College (Columbia, Ky.) and attended the University of Louisville School of Dentistry. He then embarked on his journey to build a legacy of service in his hometown.

### **The foundations for a legacy**

Farmer and his wife Kellie, also a native of Somerset, returned to the area after dental school to open his first practice. “We started very humbly with just three operatories and two team members,” he recalled. “We had zero patients in the beginning, but we have grown steadily since and made the decision a couple of years ago to keep up with new patient demands and the growth of our community. Our area has seen tremendous growth over the past two years. We needed to expand, and I think it was the right time in the right place for the style of practice that we wanted to build”

His vision for Lake Pointe Dental Care was to transition it to a larger group practice where he could bring in associates who shared the same philosophies of care and goals that he has about providing for the Somerset community and beyond. “We’re rural Kentucky; we’re not a big metro area by any means,” Farmer said. “But we are the medical hub for this part of the state.”

Farmer was able to align the dynamics of his dream practice with the growing community. “A bigger group practice would be able to handle more patients and meet more needs for the next 20 to 25 years of my practice life,” he said.

Farmer ran out of space in his previous 2,500-square-foot location. He couldn't add any more operatories or create any more room. "We had no more space in our schedule either," he said. "I felt bad. We had to schedule patients so far out in the schedule that I didn't feel like we were taking care of them in the best manner we should."

## **Breaking ground**

Building the new practice took two years from initial concept to completion. "In summer 2016, I shared my goals and vision with Andy Braun, my Patterson equipment specialist. Then I began looking for the right spot, acquired the land, developed the property and started the design and building phases."

After a year of design and development of the almost 8,000-square-foot site and a little more than a year of actual construction, Farmer's vision for Lake Pointe Dental Care became a reality. "We are now at 10 operational operatories with the capacity to go to 16. We have also slightly more than doubled staff in the past 14 to 16 months," he said.

Dr. Ellen White has recently joined the practice as a new associate and Tiffany Keck, RN, is the in-house esthetic nurse, providing all the esthetic care under Lake Pointe Aesthetics.

"I have a fantastic dental team, Farmer continued. "It's not just the building or the practice, it's the people in it that fundamentally make the difference when everyone buys into our philosophy of 'contemporary, comprehensive, compassionate care.' When we hit those three, we nail it."

## **Challenges along the way**

According to Farmer, "the challenges we had during this transition weren't focused on the dental aspect. It was a breath of fresh air to know things were designed and installed really well. Because we had planned so well and the Patterson professionals and I did our homework prior to starting the project, any challenges during the dental installation were very minimal. I have four acres of land and could build practically any size of building I desired. So, we basically built around the dental equipment. We didn't have to retrofit anything. That's how we minimized any roadblocks, because we always had that design in mind. My specific challenges were more structural- and excavation-related and included delays (of nine to 10 months) with logistics involving city planning, zoning, excavation and utilities, even with engineering plans well laid out in advance."

## **Designing something to be proud of**

Farmer was very conscientious about the location and exterior design of his building. "I wanted to build a landmark in our community because our office is one of the first things you see when you come into our town. I wanted it to be something people are proud to see."

Farmer told the Patterson Dental specialists, the architect and the contractors that building an experience was important to him. "Unfortunately, and maybe for good reason sometimes, most people don't enjoy going to a dental office," he said. "But people enjoy a great experience."

The entire backside of the building consists of a row of treatment operatories facing a natural cliffside. Farmer said the huge windows and highly vaulted ceilings make it feel very comfortable and open. "We have witnessed firsthand that it helps patients who carried dental anxiety into the practice and are now able to receive treatment without anti-anxiety types of protocols," Farmer reported. "They've even commented on it making a big difference."

## Team input

During the design and planning phases, Farmer engaged every team member to collaborate on the project. "I invited them to bring their ideas to the table about anything they liked, or that would make their job better, more efficient or more fun," he said. "We also had a list of what not to do or that wouldn't work. We all contributed a lot of little things that created big-time results. They feel some ownership because they've been a big part of the process."

Farmer said his favorite room is the education suite because "education, training and bettering oneself is very important to me. I travel to a lot of continuing education (CE) courses to expand my knowledge base and our treatment options, but I wanted to bring CE in-house for my team, too." With this new education suite, Farmer is able to leverage their own talent to improve the practice.

## Patient reactions

Farmer said providing same-day crowns with CEREC and Omnicam is probably the lifeblood of his practice. "We do digital dentistry every day," he said. "It's wonderful for our patients because the products are top of the line and the treatment modalities are so efficient. They save time for us and our patients. I specifically designed the floor plan to make these technologies an actual experience for our patients. Our milling, X-ray and CBCT units are in glass-room displays in the heart of the office. Patients love to watch their crowns being milled. It's neat to see them taking videos with their phones showing some of their dental work being done in our office and posting them online." We're very proud of our technologies, and I'm proud to have partnered with Patterson on that.

The new design incorporates top-of-the-line A-dec dental cabinetry, chairs and delivery units, which Farmer said have improved ergonomics, as well as workflow. "That has really streamlined what we do," he said. "It makes our schedule flow very efficiently, plus it looks great."

## Impact and focus

Farmer said the new office makes him feel more motivated. "I think we practice at a higher level and feel like we can deliver even better on the patients' and the community's expectations. I am personally more motivated to stay on the leading edge by being in a contemporary setting."

"I'm also very humbled and appreciative because I've been blessed with a lot. My wife and I started the practice with nothing and that in and of itself was very motivating. Building to the point where we are now, seeing the rapid rate of growth, and having the wonderful team that we do, I feel blessed."

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From Patterson Dental's blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:

<https://www.offthecusp.com/combining-career-and-community-into-a-successful-dental-practice/>