

An Interview with

Dr. Gerard Ortner



Dr. Gerard Ortner, President, Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry

As president of the Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, discuss your vision and goals for your term of office.

The Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry is the local affiliate of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. Through the AACD we interact with the preeminent leaders in the field of cosmetic dentistry and acquire hands-on specialized training using the latest materials, equipment and techniques.

The Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry presents, first and foremost, the opportunity to collaborate with some of the best cosmetic dentists in Northern California. Sharing ideas and approaches to dealing with complex restorative cases is a very positive experience. Cosmetic restorative cases involve multi-disciplinary approaches, creativity and artistic vision. Case presentations and discussion sessions are invaluable learning opportunities and I welcome the knowledge and value the camaraderie through the association of my colleagues.

On a curriculum level, it is our shared goal to present educational seminars throughout the year that address the critical categories of cosmetic dentistry. The scope and breadth of cosmetic dentistry is continually evolving as new techniques, materials and equipment are developed. Complex restorative/cosmetic case presentations and hands-on learning sessions are incorporated into our continuing education classes. We developed the Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry to gather the area's leaders in cosmetic dentistry and offer other local dentists the opportunity to participate and learn from our experience in this ever changing field.

Congratulations! Next month you will celebrate 25 years of dentistry. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in the field of dentistry?

In 1989, Dr. Rollofson, a local orthodontist and I founded a children's den-

tal program to fill the need for quality dental care for needy children. With the help of many local dentists, we grew the program to total over \$3 million dollars of cost-free dentistry for children. After 10 years of success, our program was adopted by the American Dental Association and gave rise to the national program called Smiles For Kids. Locally, the program continues to thrive through the Sacramento District Dental Society.

My partners and I continue our commitment to the children of our community through our exclusive, Giving Smiles Program. Our annual Giving Smiles Day is fun, rewarding and exhausting! Some children have such chronic pain and severe decay that eating is almost impossible. Did you know that nationally children miss 51 MILLION school hours every year, due to untreated dental problems?

I am also part of a group of health professionals dedicated to "breaking the silence on domestic violence." Why do I serve patients referred to me by local women's centers at my own expense? Because, women robbed of their smiles are silenced.

What are you passionate about in dentistry?

While I enjoy every aspect of dentistry, I am passionate about cosmetic smile design and implant dentistry. Giving a patient the smile of their dreams and restoring the health of a smile is a very cool thing! A smile is an integral part of confidence, self-esteem and relationships. It is a big component of your image, how you communicate and how others describe you. Patients share stories of new relationships, business promotions and even buying lipstick for the first time. Newlyweds describe their excitement about how their smile looks in wedding pictures. When I witness the transformation a beautiful, healthy, functional smile brings to someone's life, I feel privileged to be a part of the journey.

He's all about Smiles!

What exactly is "Smile Design"?

Cosmetic smile design is a term we use to maximize the qualities of a smile. It goes beyond making teeth white. An ideal smile is one that has repetition of tooth shape and color; where size and position of the teeth are in harmony and relative symmetry to one another. We study lip posture and gum lines, wear patterns and joint/muscle health. The need for implants is also assessed. After a series of photos are taken, a treatment plan and study models are created. Think of it this way, smile design is looking at the whole picture, where the smile is the canvas and the lips are the frame.

Tell us about a patient whose life has been transformed by cosmetic dentistry.

Currently, I am working with a patient who has suffered the ravages of a life of addiction. At her initial consultation, she had been clean and sober for 4 years, put her life back together and was about to graduate from nursing school, but she couldn't smile. Her teeth are 'bombed' by years of abuse and she was in constant pain, consuming 10-12 Tylenol per day. She actually came in with a friend, who did the talking, because she was too embarrassed to open her mouth.

Shortly after her visit, I received a phone call from her aunt, who expressed enormous pride and admiration for her niece's ability to overcome so many obstacles. "However, she can't put it back together completely unless she can smile. How can a person go through life without smiling?"

I am happy to report that, while her treatment is not complete, she is smiling now. I notice new found confidence and eagerness to talk. No more Tylenol. Her self-esteem continues to sky rocket and I am confident that she will enjoy a bright future. I'm as excited as she is to see her beautiful new smile!


Tell us something most people don't know about you.

In 2000, I was part of a U.S. Department of State approved "fact finding mission for humanitarian reasons" to Cuba. I accompanied an entourage led by Dr. Julius Krevans, Chancellor Emeritus, UCSF Medical School. It was an extraordinary experience filled with the contradictions of a communist society. Through daily meetings with Cuban officials including Castro's son, and guided tours, we learned about their culture, medical and dental facilities and economy. We witnessed the 100,000 Woman March for the return of Elian Gonzalez; the little boy found drifting on a raft off the coast of Florida. I left with a love for the local Cuban people, who were gracious, friendly and resourceful.

Any special plans to celebrate your 25 years in dentistry?

Actually, yes! My wife and I will be traveling to Omaha, Nebraska to attend my 25 year reunion from Creighton University, School of Dentistry. I am looking forward to seeing my classmates and enjoying all the festivities (Our class was known for some wild parties.) including playing in the alumni golf tournament! My wife also graduated from Creighton University and we were married in Omaha, so we have a lot of great memories, places to revisit and relatives to see!

Dr. Gerard Ortner is the president of the Sacramento Valley Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. He has received numerous local and national awards for his dedication to children and survivors of domestic abuse. Dr. Ortner has published dental education articles and appears as a dental expert on local and national television.

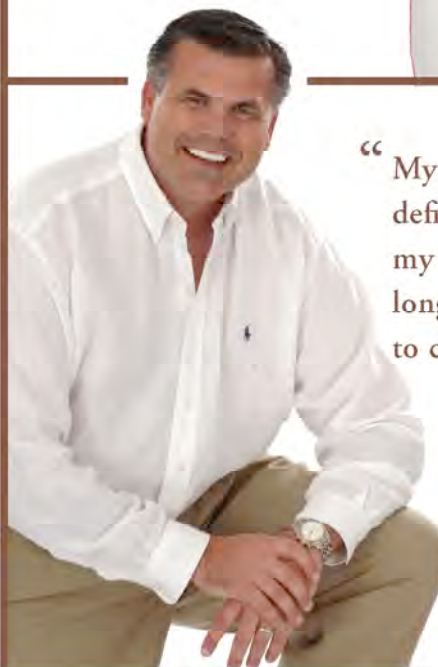
Dr. Ortner maintains private practices in Sacramento and Folsom, emphasizing comprehensive restorative, implant and esthetic smile design. For more information, or to view his photo gallery, visit sutterterrace.com or designsindentistry.com. 



"Every time I look at our wedding photos, I feel great about my new smile."



"My smile makes me feel glamorous, which makes me smile all the time."



"My smile has definitely changed my life in that I no longer feel the need to cover my mouth."