

A Day of Cleaning Teeth

— and bringing down blood pressure.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

“Open wide.” Sidney Siewert offers her patient sunglasses because the light is bright and “so that the minty grit doesn’t get in her eyeballs.” Siewert is a dental hygienist for Dr. Daniel Cassidy on Duke Street. She begins with a periodontal exam. “I’m checking her gums. We do this every couple of years so we can keep track of patterns.” Cassidy stops by for a short chat. “How are her gums?” So far, so good.

PEOPLE AT WORK

Siewert proceeds to the scaling of Tina Colby’s teeth that she says takes most of the hour appointment. “This is to clean the tartar from the teeth,” Siewert said.

Colby adds, “I am a nervous patient. I know my blood pressure will be high.”

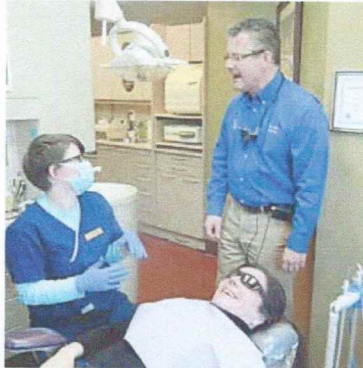
Cassidy says they take the blood pressure of all the patients because they see most dental patients 2-3 times a year which is more than most of the patients see their doctors. “We have caught some patients’ high blood pressure that they didn’t even know they had and referred them to a doctor.” Sure enough, Colby’s blood pressure is 140/90 but she said, “Here they make me feel safe.”

Siewert said, “I have some really nervous patients. Some can’t stand the noise or have had a bad experience in the past. I try to build rapport and treat them with kindness and consideration, find out what is going on in their lives.”

Colby said, “Sidney’s bedside manner is fabulous.” Siewert shoots a little spurt of air into Colby’s mouth. “That makes tartar look chalky so I can find anything I might have missed.”

Siewert said this is her first real job. “I thought I wanted to be a nurse but I shadowed a nurse for a week and found out she put in a lot of catheters. That’s not my thing.” She had a friend who was a dental hygienist so decided to give it a try. “I like it a lot.” She said she thought studying to be a dental hygienist would be easier than nursing but “it was surprisingly difficult.” She said you have to know all the curves of the teeth and the teachers at Northern Virginia Community College were strict.

“Lots of times I brought home my sterilized instruments and practiced scaling my husband’s teeth.”



Dr. Daniel Cassidy stops by to check on Tina Colby, a regular patient as Sidney Siewert begins the examination.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/GAZETTE PACKET

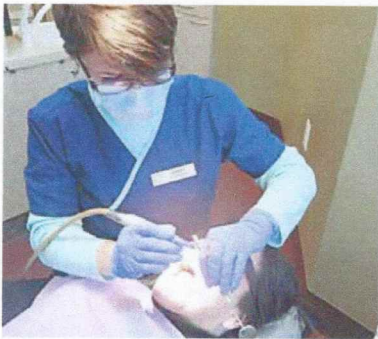
Siewert has about eight appointments a day in Cassidy’s office and works for another dentist in Old Town where she sees 12-14 patients a day.

Siewert moves on to polishing Colby’s teeth with a small container of pink mint toothpaste. “This removes the plaque and coffee stains and makes the teeth feel smooth.” Colby is starting to relax. She said, “I’m crowned all over and these two top front teeth aren’t mine.” Colby explains she was a twirler in college at the halftime shows for the Cincinnati Bengals. She had an accident with her baton and knocked out her two front teeth. “I spit them out and finished the show.”

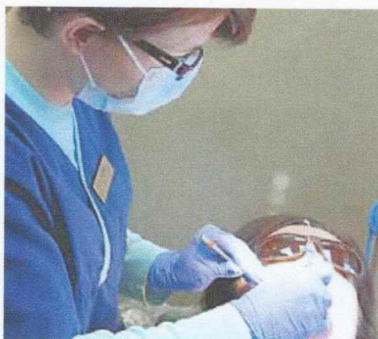
When the appointment is finished, Siewert sets up a follow-up for Colby’s last crown. It has to be scheduled around a busy schedule. “I travel a lot because my 11-year-old son plays tennis. He is ranked in the top 60 in the country and we’re headed to a tournament in Florida next week.”

Dentists are a lot more conservative than in the past according to Siewert. She explains today there are different attitudes about prevention with people taking better care of their teeth and nutrition is important, too. She says another improvement is digital x-rays with lower radiation — also dental hygiene.

Siewert said, “Instead of doing surgery first thing with a lot of tartar, we start with a deep cleaning to try to get the big nasties out.” The dentist stops by for a final check. The appointment is over, and it’s time for another blood pressure check.



Sidney Siewert, dental hygienist for Dr. Daniel Cassidy on Duke Street, begins the appointment with a periodontal examination.

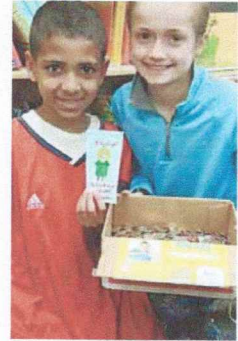


Most of the dental appointment according to the dental hygienist Sidney Siewert is scaling the enamel to remove tartar from the teeth, then polishing and flossing.

Pennies for Patients

MacArthur students raise \$8,443.17.

With the support of family, friends, and teachers, the students of Douglas MacArthur Elementary were able to raise \$8,443.17 during their three-week Pennies for Patients campaign. MacArthur students collected pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters to benefit the work of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



Ronaldo Diaz-Paz and Lily Krakowski

This year’s Pennies for Patients drive saw hard work by all students. In particular, two students and one classroom went above and beyond the call. Third grader Ronaldo Diaz-Paz began saving his coins at the end of last year’s drive. Saving pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, Ronaldo donated \$349.50 to help others in need. Fourth grader Lily Krakowski took the fight online, raising \$385.15 through online donations from Florida to California. Whitney Greisinger’s 4th grade class raised more than \$400 in the first week of the drive. The class increased its goal to \$600 then increased it again, and again, and again, donating \$1,034.20 to the Pennies for Patients campaign.

Each year the Pennies for Pa-

tients program brings together over 12 million students from across the country to help find a cure for leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society funds life-saving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services.

The Douglas MacArthur SCA is looking for local businesses to partner with next year to make the donation drive a bigger success. If a business is interested in providing matching donations during next year’s drive, contact SCA sponsor Matthew Holland at matthew.holland@acps.k12.va.us.

In Concert



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/GAZETTE PACKET

Elizabeth Kluegel and Lewis Freeman sing Donizetti/Don Pasquale duet, at the Rock Spring Concert series on Feb. 8 entitled “What is This Thing Called Love?” Kluegel lives in Alexandria where she has two children in the public school system and teaches voice lessons to a number of local students. Freeman is a singer of classical music and an actor who has performed more than 70 roles locally. They were accompanied by Edward Roberts, a pianist and vocal accompanist. The Recital Series, held at Rock Spring United Church of Christ in Arlington, began in the spring of 2001.