

Orthodontist Couple Fulfills Dream with Williamsburg, Va. Practice

Husband and wife Dr. Matthew Eppright and Dr. Patti Eppright are pleased to have their “dream” orthodontic practice in Williamsburg, Va., where they are active in the community and enjoy raising their 6-year-old daughter, Quinn. Another career step they took together was to complete their American Board of Orthodontics certifications with the November 2020 Scenario-based Clinical Examination.

The Epprights met while students at the New York University College of Dentistry. They attended separate programs for orthodontic training—Dr. Matt at Virginia Commonwealth University and Dr. Patti at the Eastman Institute for Oral Health at the University of Rochester—completing them in 2013. With their orthodontic credentials in hand, they rejoined each other as associates at an Allentown, Pa., orthodontic practice.

But during residency, the couple had “fallen in love” with Virginia where Dr. Matt was situated. Opportunity called when one of Dr. Matt’s part-time faculty at VCU, Dr. Peter Wendell, reached out to let them know he was looking for a partner to bring into his Williamsburg Orthodontics. It was a perfect fit, so the Epprights left Pennsylvania and joined the practice in February 2016. They are now 50% owners of Williamsburg Orthodontics with Dr. Wendell and will eventually take over the practice.

“We were thrilled to join Dr. Wendell, since he made such an impact on my passion for orthodontics as a faculty member,” Dr. Matt said.

The three have found great synergy working together. “All three of us treatment plan cases together. It’s a really cool thing to put our brains together,” he described.

Involved in the Community

The Epprights have embraced the practice’s casual and friendly atmosphere, dressing up for Halloween and posting fun items on the practice Facebook page. The practice supports many local charities, including sponsoring a horse for Dream Catchers, which provides equine-assisted activities for children and adults with special needs. The doctors and staff put together a dance performance for the March 2021 “Dancing with the Williamsburg Stars” benefiting the local Big Brothers Big Sisters and an adult literacy organization.

“It was an amazing bonding opportunity for our team,” Dr. Patti said. “For three months straight, we had dance practice every Tuesday afternoon and put on a show with our version of ‘Napoleon Dynamite’ from the 2004 film. We raised a lot of money for some great local organizations.”

As an incentive to attract donors to their Dancing with the Williamsburg Stars team, the Epprights also made over 250 pots of succulent plants for residents of an area senior living facility.

Dr. Matt explained, “This is such a tight knit community that we love getting involved with anything we can regarding community support. The community continues to support us and we could not be more grateful, so giving back is one of our favorite parts of owning the business.”

Williamsburg affords them the advantages of a small town and a larger city. Both athletic, Dr. Matt plays in an adult soccer league and coaches a local youth soccer team. Dr. Patti enjoys running, swimming, basketball and tennis.

Practicing Together, Certifying Together

Could it be challenging to practice with your spouse? Dr. Patti responded, “Over the years of figuring it out, we’ve found a balance of the best ways to work together. Our training programs both valued evidence-based practice so interestingly enough, we’ve never had significant disagreements on treatment plans. While there might be small differences in approach, our similar backgrounds enable us to easily find a mutually agreed-upon approach.”

Dr. Matt noted that the most difficult part of working together has been the business aspects. “I had a bad habit of discussing work situations at home. However, we found it isn’t enjoyable for either of us. So, we’ve carved out individual roles on the business management side and we have full trust in each other to carry out those roles.”

While the Epprights have gone through a process to shape how they share and manage a practice, it was always clear they would pursue ABO certification. Passing the ABO Written Exam was a requirement of both their orthodontic training programs. At Williamsburg Orthodontics, Dr. Wendell already was board certified and he encouraged the Epprights to complete certification.

“He was a big inspiration. He believes certification has been a very important part of his development as an orthodontist,” Dr. Matt said.

The ABO logo and the words “Board Certified” are displayed prominently with the photos of the Epprights and Dr. Wendell on the practice website.

The Epprights were in the first cohort to take the Scenario-based Clinical Examination at a Scantron Testing Center, a change made to accommodate COVID-19 protocols.

“While we knew a little bit less of what to expect initially, we would like to give the ABO credit for producing really solid study materials that made us feel more comfortable,” Dr. Patti said.

Dr. Matt added, “The thorough literature review that we did based on ABO recommendations really helped our clinical practice. While it felt like an intimidating process before we started, the ABO was very supportive in terms of the study materials they provided.”