

Far And Away, The Best Choice

Long drive and great dentist are a Winn-win for supermarket exec after thorough smile restoration

BY ROY CUMMINGS
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Few people take a job as a bagger at a grocery store with the intention of making a career out of it. Raymond Rhee didn't. But a career in the supermarket industry is exactly what came of his bagging experience.

"I took the job as a bagger right out of high school to help pay my way through college," Raymond explains. "I was studying aerospace engineering at the time, but I later switched my major to finance, so it took me a while to graduate.

"Part of that was because I was working full time and going to college part time, and I eventually became the manager of the grocery store I was working for. Ever since then, I've been working my way up through the parent company of that store."

That parent company is Southeastern Grocers. It is the owner and operator of Winn-Dixie, Harveys and Fresco Y Mas supermarkets. Raymond, 53, has worked his way up to become the company's chief human resources officer.

"I've been in this role for a year and a half," he says. "Prior to that, I spent 10 years as the vice president of finance. What I love most about my new role is that it allows me to get out to all our stores and meet our employees."

Raymond always greets those employees with a bright, confident smile. He couldn't have done that a few years ago. The reason: missing and cracked teeth, which were largely a result of neglect as he concentrated on his climb up the corporate ladder.

"As I became an executive, I allowed my health to become secondary to everything else," Raymond confirms. "I was working long hours in a very stressful job, and I put on a lot of weight, my blood pressure rose and I stopped taking good care of my teeth.

"I used to grind my teeth a lot, and with the added stress of my job, I was doing that more and more. That led to some of the cracks, and because I was already missing some teeth, I was hesitant to smile because I didn't want people to see the missing teeth and cracks.

"But it wasn't just smiling that was a problem. I had a hard time chewing, too. I love a good steak, but I couldn't chew it. I couldn't even bite into a sandwich. I had to cut them up into little pieces, so I had to eat a lot of soups and soft foods instead."

It was on his 50th birthday that Raymond decided to do something about his health. Part of the plan he adopted included finding a dentist to rebuild his smile. Raymond wasn't going to settle for just any dentist, though.

"I wanted a long-term solution for my dental problems, so I wanted a dentist who had the expertise and skill to do the job right," Raymond explains. "So, I went online to the American Academy of Implant Dentistry and started searching for implant dentists.

"I live in Jacksonville, but I couldn't find any dentists who met my criteria there. The closest one I could find was in Palm Coast, and that was Dr. Patel. Even though he was an hour away, I went to see him because he had the credentials I was looking for."

The Road to Recovery

Jayraj J. Patel, DMD, FAGD, first met Raymond while practicing in Palm Coast almost four years ago. Since then, Dr. Patel



has become the primary provider at DeLand Implant Dentistry, where Raymond remains a loyal patient.

"I don't want to travel two hours for anything, but I gladly travel two hours to see Dr. Patel because the quality of care he provides is absolutely the best I've ever had," Raymond exudes. "And he's a one-stop shop. He does it all.

"That's another reason why I selected him. I knew that whatever work I needed to have done, Dr. Patel could do it all in one place. And the work he has done in rebuilding my smile and my confidence has been nothing short of exceptional."

Dr. Patel's care for Raymond began with a meticulous examination. Dr. Patel then spent a week evaluating his findings and developing a treatment plan. That dedication in time further convinced Raymond that he'd made the right choice in selecting Dr. Patel.

"He was so thorough with everything he did," Raymond enthuses. "The examination was thorough, and the fact that he took a week putting together the treatment plan told me that he was looking for the best possible solution for me."

That solution started with a thorough cleaning of Raymond's teeth and gums to ensure he had a solid foundation for the smile restoration that followed. That restoration work began with Dr. Patel performing root canals on two teeth, an upper right and lower left canine.

After the root canals, Dr. Patel turned his attention to Raymond's six missing teeth and a left front tooth that was deemed unsalvageable and required extraction.

Satisfying Solution

To replace those teeth, Dr. Patel recommended *dental implants*, screw-like bodies that are surgically placed into the jawbone, where they become the foundation for an abutment that is capped with a crown.

During one session in which Raymond was

placed under sedation, Dr. Patel extracted the failing front tooth and fit Raymond with seven dental implants, including two that required a *sinus lift* because of extensive bone loss in the jawbone.

Also known as a *sinus floor augmentation*, a sinus lift is a procedure during which the dentist drills through the jawbone and lifts the sinus membrane to create more space for the implant.

A sinus lift is done in conjunction with another procedure called a *bone graft* in which autologous bone or synthetic bone grafting material is packed into the implant site to enhance the volume of the jawbone so that it can properly support the implant.

Bone grafts are not always necessary, but with patients who have been missing teeth for many years, a graft is sometimes required because bone mass deteriorates when there is no pressure from chewing to stimulate natural bone regeneration.

Once in place, implants require three to six months to heal and for new bone to grow around them to provide the needed support. During that period, some patients are fit with temporary teeth.

Raymond was missing mostly back teeth, so he was fit with a temporary prosthetic only for the front tooth that had been extracted. He returned to Dr. Patel a few months later and received the permanent teeth that he proudly shows off today.

"I couldn't be happier with the outcome," Raymond says. "The long drives have been well worth it, because not only do I have a smile that I'm proud of, but I can now eat anything I want. I'm even enjoying steak again, thanks to Dr. Patel.

"Another great thing is, I literally cannot tell the difference between my real teeth and those that have implants. That's how good a job Dr. Patel did. He gave me that long-term solution I was looking for." ■

Meet the DOCTORS

Jayraj Patel, DMD, FAGD



earned his dental degree from the University of Florida College of Dentistry. His goal is to deliver comprehensive and compassionate care to patients in a comfortable, professional environment. He provides advance, personalized and complete care using the latest technologies and treatment modalities with an aim to build a long-term relationship with patients based on trust, respect and friendship. Driven by a deep passion to help patients, he is constantly pursuing advanced training through continuing education courses. He has extensive training in implant dentistry through the AAID MaxiCourse from Augusta University Dental College of Georgia and Comprehensive Implant Continuum from Implant Educators. He is certified to perform IV sedation in the dental office. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry, a fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry and International Congress of Oral Implantologists, and an associate fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry.

Rajiv Patel, BDS, MDS (Retired)



practiced general dentistry in DeLand for more than 30 years before retiring. He is certified in implant dentistry through his designation as a diplomate of the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry. Additionally, he is a fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry and International Congress of Oral Implantologists. He is one of the select few general dentists certified to administer IV sedation in a dental office. He is a member of the Florida Dental Association, American Dental Association and Florida Dental Society of Anesthesiology.



To Learn MORE

Call Today!

Dr. Jayraj Patel and Dr. Rajiv Patel are known for their exceptional, caring attitude toward their patients and work. They are committed to delivering the most advanced, personalized dental care while offering patients a uniquely satisfying experience. Along with the staff of DeLand Implant Dentistry, they welcome new patients and any questions concerning their range of services, including cleanings, preventive care, sedation and cosmetic, restorative, prosthetic and implant dentistry. For an appointment, call or visit the office.

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