



The Ballerina's Smile by Nicole Francois / Photography by Robert Jesse

Children can be brutal in ways adults are not. That is where this story begins; in a children's ballet class, nearly three years ago, when a five-year-old girl said something appalling about her teacher's smile. That teacher is Heidi Humphreys, a local ballet instructor who trained in Europe, has a Master's degree in Dance, and enough patience and grace to teach ballet to children ages two through eighteen.

When Dance Kids of Monterey Co-Founder Carol Richmond overheard a little girl's comment to Miss Heidi, she knew something must be done. Richmond contacted Dance Kids board member, mother, and resident smile doctor, Jeanette Kern, D.D.S. Kern explains that Richmond pulled her aside during a

dance class her daughters were attending. "She told me a little girl said Miss Heidi had one of the ugliest smiles she had ever seen. My heart sank," Kern says.

The two women decided to take action. Kern approached Heidi, knowing that extensive dental treatment would not be possible to fund on a dance teacher's salary and limited health benefits. Because of the special circumstances, Kern offered treatment pro-bono. "I couldn't believe it," Heidi exclaims. "When I was younger we made a choice between sending me to Europe to learn dance, or braces. Of course we went with Europe. Over the years I had stopped smiling."



Originally Kern hoped to simply whiten Heidi's smile and perhaps place veneers. However, after a thorough examination, Kern realized there were some structural issues. So, she contacted Dr. Cassady, a board-certified orthodontist. Chad Cassady, D.D.S., M.S. examined Heidi. He also recognized Heidi's case would be complex because his shared patient still had some primary teeth, was missing her incisors and needed her wisdom teeth extracted. He called in Periodontist, Ehsan Rezvan, D.D.S., M.S., a specialist in gum health and dental implant placement.

"We took out Heidi's wisdom teeth and the remaining primary teeth, and noted Heidi would need two dental implants because she never grew lateral incisors." Rezvan says. With extensive treatment and doctors volunteering, it was essential Heidi be a good patient. Dr. Rezvan likens Heidi's cooperation to her professional

role. "With doctor and patient it takes two to tango," Rezvan says. "She did everything we asked of her, practicing excellent dental care at home."

The doctors changed Heidi's smile with their three-pronged approach. "When Heidi came to us she was self-conscious about her smile," Cassady remembers. "She had wanted to change it but didn't know how. As doctors we understood we weren't just addressing aesthetics; we were addressing function."

Over the course of two years, Heidi's teeth were aligned, dental implants were placed and crowns were added. For the finishing touch, Heidi had a deep cleaning and an in-office whitening treatment. "Now I can really present myself without thinking about my teeth," Heidi says. "I just smile at people automatically and engage in conversation."