

John Berryman, DDS - A Dentist Story

Dr. John Berryman lost everything to Hurricane Katrina only to find serendipity in Wisconsin.

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall and devastated the lives of countless people. At the time, Dr. John Berryman was practicing dentistry with a private group in New Orleans. Prior to the hurricane, the future looked bright. But in the days after, it was apparent that nothing would ever be the same. The storm ripped through New Orleans, breaching nearly every levy around the city, causing massive flooding. The toll on human life and property was unthinkable.

When Katrina first hit, Dr. Berryman left for Wisconsin to wait out the storm with friends and family. It was supposed to be short-lived. However, the stay ended up being longer than he had hoped, and he wasn't able to return to New Orleans until October.

"Once back in New Orleans we started digging out," said Dr. Berryman. "It took three months and it was like an archaeological dig to see what we could salvage." Unfortunately, not much could be saved.

After digging out his home, Dr. Berryman next had to dig out his dental office. It was an arduous task that took until December to complete, a full three months after the storm that ruined so many lives had moved on.

"After sorting out what was left of the office, we debated for a couple months what to do next," said Dr. Berryman. "Ultimately we decided not to rebuild."

His next move was back to Wisconsin. "I really had nowhere to go, so I went back to Wisconsin to regroup, thinking it would be a temporary stay," said Dr. Berryman.

But with a bit of luck that he cites as serendipity, his daughter found an online advertisement for Midwest Dental. "She found the ad just as I was starting to think about what to do next," said Dr. Berryman. "Corporate dental practice was completely new to me at the time, so I wasn't really looking in that direction."

Dr. Berryman soon called Midwest Dental only to learn that there was nothing immediately available for him. "We had a nice chat and agreed to keep in touch," said Dr. Berryman. "I figured that was probably the end of it."

“It was like an archaeological dig to see what we could salvage.”

Fast forward three weeks later to an unexpected call. “It was Midwest Dental calling with an offer. They wanted me to lead an office on the east side of Madison,” said Dr. Berryman. “And the start date was Monday, less than a week away! I hadn’t even settled in a home yet. Things were starting to move very quickly.”

And so after 30 years of experience behind him, Dr. Berryman began his new role with Midwest Dental in April of 2006. Today, he practices with one other doctor, four hygienists, four dental assistants, two patient service representatives, and one business office manager. “A well-rounded team,” said Dr. Berryman. “Really great people.”

Not originally knowing what to expect from a dental service organization, it turns out it suits Dr. Berryman very well. “I like Midwest Dental a lot and I love that they handle all the business items most dentists don’t want to do,” said Dr. Berryman. “For example, for every three and a half to four days of actual clinical care, a private practice dentist has at least one day of paperwork to do. I don’t have that day. I do ten minutes here, ten minutes there. But mostly I just practice dentistry.”

In his office in Madison, Dr. Berryman is a long ways away in both miles and time since his days in New Orleans. And he is happy where he’s at. He now lives near his daughter and spends his free time with his grandkids.

“I often think how lucky I am to have found Midwest Dental after the flood,” said Dr. Berryman. “I still plan on practicing for another seven to eight years. Things have worked out extra well.”

Over a decade later, Hurricane Katrina still ranks as the number one costliest Atlantic hurricane.



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