

A Dentist's Story

If you were to ask Dr. Katie Walton what it takes to be a great dentist, one of her first answers would be confidence. And that makes perfect sense doesn't it? The more confident you are in your abilities, the better you are likely to perform. Not to mention the extra comfort and satisfaction your patients will feel! And as Dr. Walton would tell you, one of the keys to true confidence is to never stop improving. In fact, that has been her formula for success since she first decided to become a dentist.

After earning her undergraduate degree from Montana State University, Dr. Walton knew she wanted to improve people's health and lives. She originally wanted to be a physician, but one day she took the opportunity to shadow a dentist and from that moment on she knew dentistry was the path for her.

Dr. Walton attended the Marquette School of Dentistry in Milwaukee, where she developed a particular passion for prosthodontics. Something about the "big picture" of full mouth restoration really appealed to her. Knowing she wanted to make this a big part of her professional career, Dr. Walton realized she would need to focus heavily on improving her prosthodontics skills, which is just what she did. And that approach seems to have worked. "It ended up being my best subject by far," she stated.

After graduating from Marquette in 2015, Dr. Walton joined Midwest Dental, taking a job at their practice in Elgin, Illinois. She had heard about several dental groups while in school, but ultimately chose to join Midwest Dental as she felt it would provide her with the best opportunity to develop as a dentist.

When Dr. Walton started with Midwest Dental, she worked alongside Dr. Mary Kane McAuslan, a dentist with many years of professional experience. "I was so grateful to work with a mentor as I started my career," she said. "Dr. McAuslan helped me fine-tune my skills and gave me the confidence to try new things. Every day I felt better about my ability to care for my patients."

But there is always room to keep improving, as Dr. Walton stresses, and continuing education is one of her top priorities. In an ever-changing field like dentistry, she understands the importance of keeping up to speed on new technology, learning enhanced skills, and refining existing ones in order to effectively provide care.

Dr. Walton enrolled in Midwest Dental's Advanced Learning and Mentorship Program, or ALMP. The ALMP combines custom continuing education programs with a full-time career, and Dr. Walton completely embraced it. The ALMP allowed Dr. Walton to learn more about topics she had less experience with. "I chose to take an endodontics course," she said. "I didn't get a lot of endo experience in school and I felt I needed some extra training before taking on more complicated cases." Midwest Dental sent her to a course in California, where she received comprehensive, hands-on training in advanced endodontic procedures. "I came out of the course with a whole new perspective on approaching endo work, and now I feel ready to tackle any case that comes my way," Dr. Walton stated.

And she didn't stop there. The ALMP also allowed Dr. Walton to further enhance skills she was already experienced in. She came out of dental school with a firm grasp on treatment planning, but wanted to get even better so she could take on more complex cases. The ALMP offered an advanced treatment planning course and Dr. Walton dove right in. "I was really glad to hear the ALMP offers training in subjects beyond clinical dental procedures," she said. "The treatment planning course taught me how to create strategic treatment plans that could help ensure long-term oral health for my patients, regardless of the complexity of their cases. It made me feel much more confident in the care I was recommending."

But it wasn't just the course offerings Dr. Walton enjoyed. "While taking courses through the ALMP, I also work as a full-time dentist at the Midwest Dental practice," she said. "When I'm practicing in the clinic, I earn a salary and continuing education credits. Not only do I gain valuable experience serving real patients, but I am never worried about finances or by the thought of not meeting my CE requirements. It has been the perfect environment for me to grow as a dentist and focus on patient care."

Barely a year after graduating from dental school, Dr. Walton is now practicing like a seasoned veteran. With Midwest Dental's support, she has been able to stay on top of her game and enhance the health and lives of her patients, which is what she wanted all along.



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