

# Matthew Ford, DDS – A Dentist Story

**If you want to make it big, sometimes you need to think small.**

What if you could live and practice in a place where a nice lake house is affordable and within a 15 minute drive to work? Where a scenic golf course is literally a chip shot from your office door? Where everybody knows your name?

It's not a dream. You can have all these great things, you just need to think small. That's what Dr. Matt Ford did, and it has worked out incredibly well for him.

Dr. Ford is no stranger to seeing the big picture in small places. The son of a college basketball coach, Dr. Ford moved around a lot growing up. But he spent a good majority of his youth in the small town of Morris, Minnesota, where his dad was best friends with the town dentist. Dr. Ford vividly remembers what a big deal the local dentist was. "He had a beautiful home in town and loved to play golf at the local club," Dr. Ford recalls. But more than anything, Dr. Ford remembers the connection his old dentist had with the community. "He knew everyone and everyone knew him," said Dr. Ford. "And I really admired how he treated people and how they respected him in return." Little did he know the impact his dentist's impression would have on his own life.

Dr. Ford received his undergraduate degree in business from Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, where he also developed a deep interest in the sciences. "I wanted to pursue a career that mixed both my fields of interest," he said. "Something in healthcare seemed to fit the bill, and after speaking with some health professionals, I realized dentistry was just right for me." He took the required undergrad course work, and then in what seemed like a flash, he graduated from Midwestern University in Glendale, Arizona with his DMD degree.

Dr. Ford was anxious to start his career, but graduation threw into sharp focus the one thing dental school had not fully prepared him for – running his own business. Despite his business degree, running a practice while also seeing patients was a whole other challenge. Rather than diving blindly into practice

ownership, he decided he first wanted to learn the ins and outs of working at a dental practice.

He began practicing alongside another dentist at a newly built clinic in Omaha, Nebraska. Being fresh out of school, Dr. Ford was eager to start seeing a lot of patients on a regular basis to develop his skills. But he soon learned the downside of his big city career. Being in a new practice in a city where it seemed like there was another dentist on every corner, he found that patients were hard to come by; loyal ones even more so. Before long, sharing an already small patient load with another dentist left him feeling unfulfilled and lacking the professional development he wanted.

“I graduated dental school with so much confidence,” Dr. Ford said. “But not being able to consistently practice dentistry due to large breaks in the schedule was draining me. I was losing my confidence and it was a really difficult thing for me to face.”

Dr. Ford wasn't sure how much longer he could continue practicing this way. He suddenly found himself thinking back to the local dentist from his hometown. That man had embodied everything Dr. Ford wanted for himself. So he began looking for a new career opportunity, and he found one that, almost too perfectly, brought him back to small town Minnesota.

Dr. Ford took over as the sole dentist of Midwest Dental in Melrose, Minnesota, a town of barely 4,000 people. It was quite a change from a city of over 900,000, but Dr. Ford saw only opportunity in this little locale. He has not looked back since.

In only his first month in Melrose, he quadrupled the best production he ever had back in Omaha. He went from scraping for patients to having a full schedule almost every day. “Moving to a place where I was truly needed was such a refreshing change from barely being noticed,” said D. Ford. “I did not have to change anything about my style or approach to dentistry, and being the go-to guy for a whole town ensured I was getting all the professional development I needed.”

Dr. Ford also enjoyed the pace and freedom of his small town practice. “There is never any pressure, no rush to meet quotas or provide services I am not comfortable with,” said Dr. Ford. “And I have complete autonomy to lead the practice and have as much say as I want in how things operate. Midwest Dental has allowed me to make the practice my own, and it truly feels just like private practice would, but with a lot less stress.”

Ok, that all sounds pretty good, but what about life outside of work? There's nothing for a young dentist to do in a small town is there? Well, Dr. Ford can quickly put that argument to rest.

"I found everything I could ever need in Melrose," he said. "Living on the beautiful lake just north of town is an incredible retreat after work. I can walk down to my dock and kayak or catch a few fish. Other days I just head down the street from my office and play a round of golf."

With his extra disposable income, Dr. Ford has no problem finding ways to have fun. The Twin Cities are less than 90 minutes away, and he often drives into town on weekends to enjoy a more urban lifestyle. He is also traveling a lot more than he was ever able to at his previous job. And of course, he was able to put a lot more toward paying off his student loans.

More than anything else however, Dr. Ford loves being part of the community in Melrose. "Shortly after starting my new position with Midwest Dental, I joined the local Chamber of Commerce," he said. "Organizations like that are vitally important to small towns, and I hope to contribute as much as I can going forward."

Before long he found himself feeling very much like his old dentist back in Morris. "People greet me all the time, and many come up and thank me for serving the community," he said. "The appreciation is so real and palpable. They know me and I know them; it's just amazing. Small town Midwestern people truly are the salt of the earth."

It just goes to show that sometimes it pays to think small.



3500 American Blvd W, Suite 130

Bloomington, MN 55431

Andrew Lockie | 715.502.2122

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