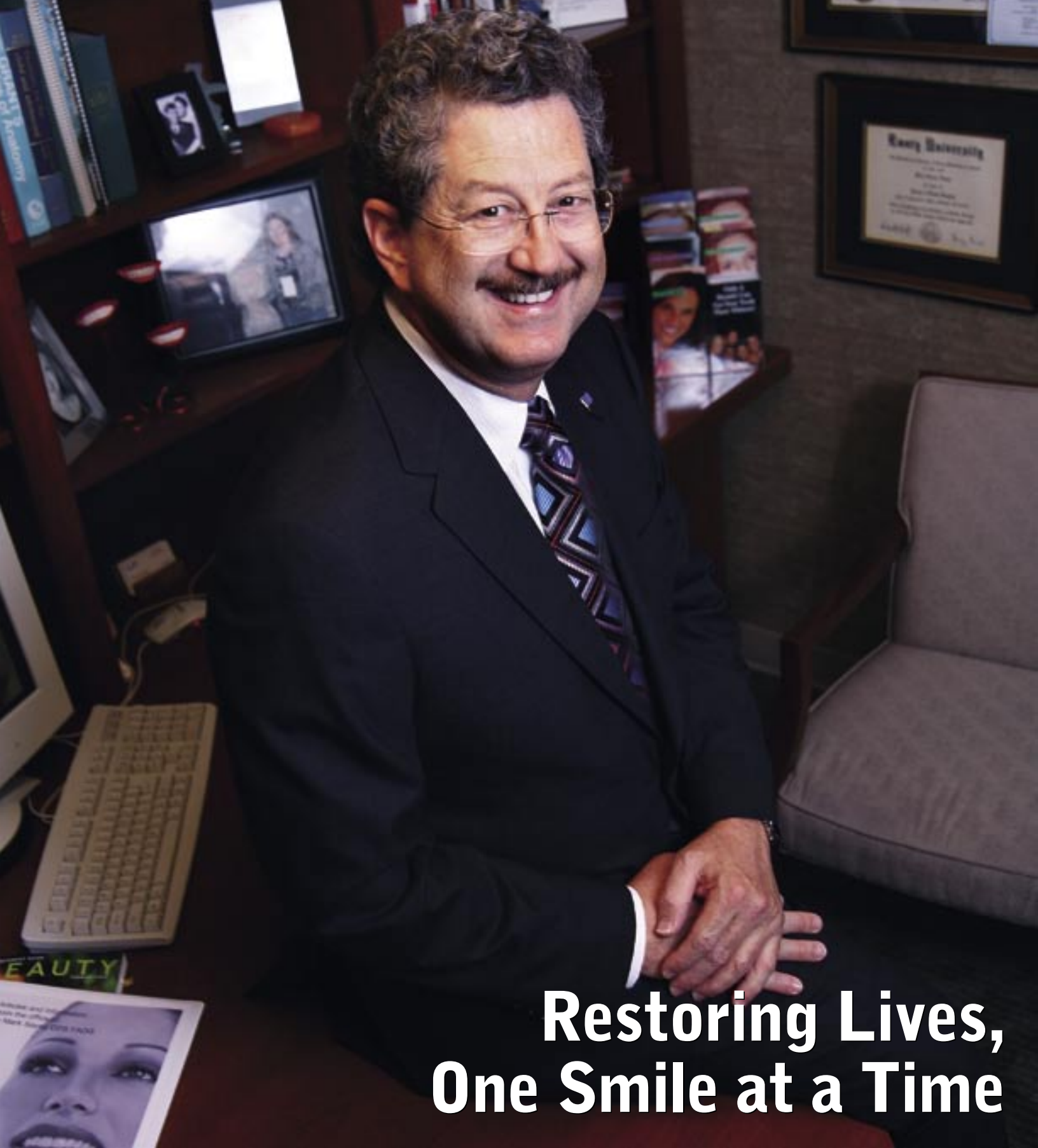


# DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR DENTISTS



**Restoring Lives,  
One Smile at a Time**

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ON THE COVER  
Dr. Mark G. Sayeg

PHOTO BY JEREMY ADAMO



# Restoring Lives, One Smile at a Time

By Lori Lovely

Modest and soft spoken, Dr. Mark G. Sayeg rarely seeks the spotlight. Instead, the Sandy Springs-based dentist prefers devoting his attention to patients and continuing his education to stay abreast of the latest developments, particularly in cosmetic dentistry procedures. Now, as Chairman of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry's Give Back a Smile program, this Georgia dentist is ready to speak out about an incredible program that helps survivors of domestic violence.

Quoting statistics indicating that 25 percent of American women find themselves in an abusive relationship at some point in their lives, and 75 percent of them receive some type of trauma to the upper body, Sayeg felt compelled to do something. "I wanted to make a difference, not just write a check. I like the personal involvement. The AACD

**In addition to chairing the Give Back a Smile program, he volunteers as a clown for the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade, joining a group of chief executives from local businesses in the Distinguished Clown Corps.**



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY DR. MARK SAYEG



PHOTO BY JEREMY ADAMO

**"I see only a few patients a day, so I can give them the best care. Angela Braden is relaxed in the chair as Dr. Sayeg restores her beautiful smile. "The first step to trust is getting to know each other. They need to be able to confide in their doctor."**

has been the leading force in revolutionizing the field of cosmetic dentistry, and now we are striving to use the skills we have learned to give back to our communities." An active member for nearly 14 years, Sayeg served as President of the Atlanta chapter prior to acting as Chair of the charitable arm of the organization this year.

Through the Give Back a Smile program, dentists across the nation provide cosmetic dental care at no cost to survivors of domestic violence. Participating dental labs donate lab fees. Joining forces with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the AACD launched its program in 1999. Since then, Sayeg says, dental professionals have donated \$3.5 million in services to treat 457 patients.

The AACD Charitable Foundation GBAS program assists men and women who received dental injuries from a former intimate partner or spouse in a domestic assault. Borrowing from the group's motto, Sayeg says, "We restore their lives. It's hard to get a job if you can't smile."

In 2001, the program won the Award of Excellence and the Summit Award in the Associations Advance America Awards program, a national competition sponsored by the American Society of Association Executives. Awards help achieve one aim of the group: raising awareness about domestic violence. As Chair, Sayeg hopes to build on that and focus on another goal: increasing the amount of services donated to \$5 million. "We have increased service by 50 percent every year since 1999. My goal is for us to become *the* organization to help victims of domestic violence."

To accomplish that task, Sayeg, as Chair, plans to expand the program in order to reach more people. He also hopes to "use PR to get our name out there. There are lots of doctors who want to donate their time. We need to find patients in the areas where there are doctors,



**“Nobody likes going to the dentist, but we make it as pleasant as possible.”** Some of the ways Sayeg and staff do that include providing a refreshment bar that is fully stocked with gourmet coffees, herbal teas, bottled water, juices and freshly baked cookies. Office assistant Rebecca Young serves a thirsty patient a cool drink.

and vice versa. We want to be able to help people anywhere in the United States. We just need to spread the word.”

## NOT JUST CLOWNING AROUND

The more you give, the more you receive, Sayeg believes. “My children are grown,” says the father of two and grandfather, “and I have a very successful practice, so now I have time to give back.” In addition to chairing the Give Back a Smile program, he volunteers as a clown

**The newest spa service includes a complimentary paraffin wax hand treatment. “It’s very therapeutic and lets the patient relax. Some of my patients look forward to their appointment because they know it’s an hour they can relax.”**



PHOTOS BY JEREMY ADAMO

**“I have a great staff,”** he boasts. Jessica Eubanks, Rebecca Young, Shiny Southernland, Lorie Dunn, Tanya Hallowell and Dr. Mark Sayeg make a good team. The team includes one of his two daughters, Lorie, who works as the office manager. A team player and a generous boss, Sayeg does things to “make it fun” around the office. **“People need to feel appreciated.”**

for the Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade, joining a group of chief executives from local businesses in the Distinguished Clown Corps. “It’s the most fun I’ve had in charity work!” In the morning before the parade begins, he visits children in the hospital. Then, following in the wake of fellow clowns distributing candy along the parade route, he hands out toothbrushes and asks the children what they should do after eating candy. They all yell out: “Brush!”

In addition to being a distinguished clown, Sayeg is also a distinguished dentist, with fellowships in the International Academy of Dental-Facial Aesthetics, the International College of Dentists and the Academy of General Dentistry — an honor achieved by only 3 percent of dentists in the country. He holds memberships in the American Society of Dental Aesthetics, the American Dental Association, the Hinman Dental Society and, of course, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentists.

A graduate of Emory Dental School, Sayeg has been practicing dentistry in Sandy Springs for 24 years. Despite his years of experience, his education is ongoing. Committed to

keeping up to date with the latest cosmetic dentistry procedures, he completes approximately 80 hours of high-quality continuing education courses a year. In addition, he studies with the leading research and development dentists. “It’s important to keep up with current trends so I can provide quality care. Things change; there’s always something new. There are very few procedures I do today the same way I learned in dental school.”

Some of the equipment and techniques he uses now weren’t around when he was in dental school, either: digital X-rays, a diode laser, air abrasion, computer technology, computer-milled ceramic crowns and metal-free restorations. Digital X-rays are the latest in dental technology, making it easier to diagnose problems, and perhaps, more importantly, show patients exactly what the dentist sees. “Sometimes I just put up the X-ray and don’t say anything. The patient will look at it and say, ‘Oh, I need a crown.’”

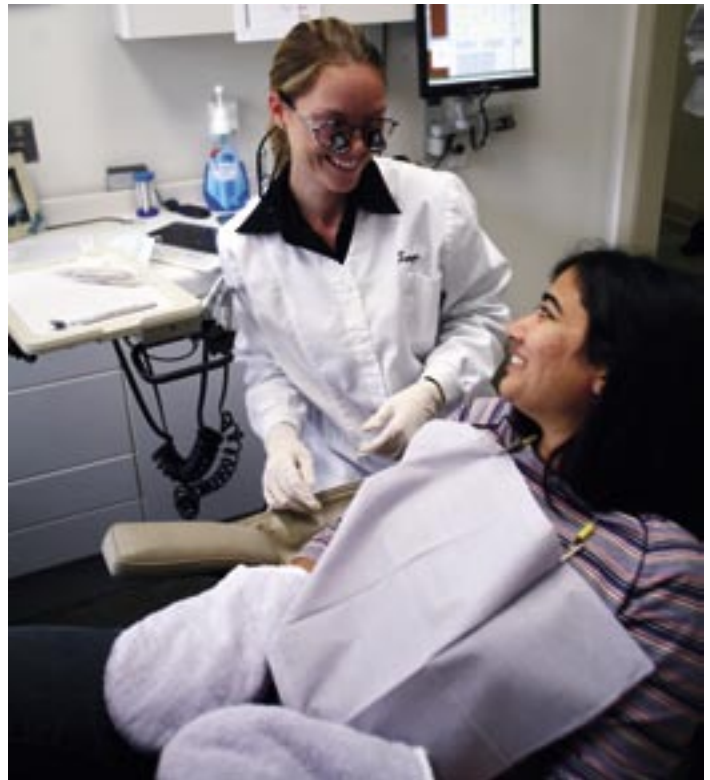
By showing patients the condition of their mouth through digital X-rays, Sayeg can educate them while earning their trust. “I want my patients to trust me, but I know trust has to be earned.” He mentions one new patient who came to him after leaving another dentist because the patient didn’t trust the recommended treatment plan. Using a mirror and the digital X-rays, Sayeg was able not only to explain, but also to show the problem. “The other dentist was right, but once the patient could see the problem, it was easier to accept the treatment plan. It’s important to educate the patient. It’s their mouth; they need to be involved. Patients must take responsibility for their own treatment.”

Nevertheless, as a responsible dentist, Sayeg takes accountability for treating his patients thoroughly. Because teeth play a significant role in overall health, he says it’s important to understand the whole body, and how medications affect it. For instance, some medications cause dry mouth, which can lead to dental problems. Some medications, such as antidepressants, may cause teeth grinding. Other medications don’t interact well. “There’s a strong inter-relationship between

**Dr. Sayeg feels fortunate that he gets to do the type of dentistry he likes doing. “I like restoring smiles; it means more than anything else. It’s very rewarding.”**



PHOTOS BY JEREMY ADAMO



**Acknowledging that Atlanta is home to some of the top dentists in the country, Dr. Sayeg believes he needs to give his patients a reason to patronize his practice. Dr. Sayeg’s hygienist, Tanya Hallowell, offers the same patient care and comfort to Seema Saini.**

drugs. It’s important to have a relationship [with the patient] so I’m aware of potential problems. One of the latest problems is with the new osteoporosis medications that may cause complications during tooth extractions.”

Other problems are more organic. It can be as simple as teeth that don’t meet properly, leading to food that isn’t chewed properly, resulting in an upset stomach. Or it can be much more serious. Sayeg

indicates that dentists often see signs of diabetes before patients or their doctors do by noticing changes in the gingival tissues in the mouth.

“It’s critical to know a patient’s medical history.” That’s why he spends time discussing their overall health. He meets privately with new patients on their initial visit, so they can discuss issues. “I see only a few patients a day, so I can give them the best care. It’s important. The first step to trust is getting to know each other. They need to be able to confide in their doctor.”

## FRIEND OR PATIENT?

As far as Sayeg is concerned, patients also need to feel comfortable while they’re at the dentist office. “What makes our practice special is that we do cosmetic dentistry in comfort. Nobody likes going to the dentist,

but we make it as pleasant as possible.” Some of the ways Sayeg and his staff do that include providing a refreshment bar that is fully stocked with gourmet coffees, herbal teas, bottled water, juices and freshly baked cookies.

Treatment room amenities include pillows, comforters, eye pillows and warm scented towels after the procedure. Patients can listen to music on XM radio headsets or watch “Seinfeld” episodes or movies on overhead monitors during treatment. The newest spa service includes a complimentary paraffin wax hand treatment. “It’s very therapeutic and lets the patient relax. If they can relax in the dental chair, it helps. Some of my patients look forward to their appointment because they know it’s an hour they can relax.”

Acknowledging that Atlanta is home to some of the top dentists in the country, Sayeg believes he needs to give his patients a reason to patronize his practice. In addition to the spa treatment, he treats patients “like friends. I treat them like they’re coming to my home. I don’t keep them waiting, I know their time is valuable, and I think it’s just common courtesy to respect that.”

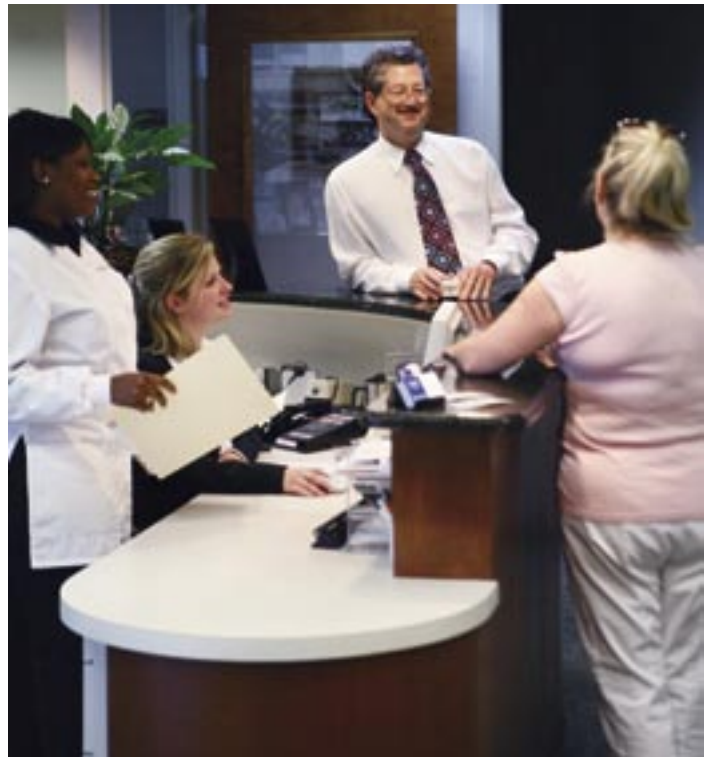
Beyond the pampering, patients receive superior dental service. Although Sayeg performs all aspects of dentistry, from cleanings to fillings and more, he specializes in cosmetic dentistry, such as teeth whitening, cosmetic contouring, bonding and restorative work with ceramic crowns, porcelain veneers, bridges and implants. “I enjoy the cosmetic part; it’s creative and I love helping people improve their smiles. I enjoy coming to work.”

His goal is to make each smile look natural and like it belongs to the individual. He takes the time to make it right for each person, but explains that there’s a lot of science in finding out what’s right. “I’m guided by the four pillars of beauty throughout nature: clarity — you shouldn’t see individual teeth, but a pleasing smile; symmetry — one side of the face should match the other; harmony — the teeth should fit the face, with that ‘golden proportion’ between teeth width and

**His goal is to make each smile looks natural and like it belongs to the individual. He takes the time to make it right for each person, but explains that there’s a lot of science in finding out what’s right.**



PHOTOS BY JEREMY ADAMO



**“I’m guided by the four pillars of beauty throughout nature: clarity — you shouldn’t see individual teeth, but a pleasing smile; symmetry — one side of the face should match the other; harmony — the teeth should fit the face, with that ‘golden proportion’ between teeth width and length; and vivid color.”**

length; and vivid color.

“A smile shouldn’t be the first thing you see when a person walks into a room,” he continues. “You should see the warmth of their smile. The best compliment I can get is when a patient is complimented on looking good, but nobody realizes they had their teeth done.”

## **RESTORING TEETH EQUALS RESTORING CONFIDENCE**

Sayeg feels fortunate that he gets to do the type of dentistry he likes doing. “I like restoring smiles; it means more than anything else. It’s very rewarding.” Combining the kind of dentistry he loves with his charity work is doubly rewarding and gives him confidence as a dentist.

His enthusiasm is contagious. Sayeg’s staff is attentive to patients and attuned to the charity work he does, eagerly joining in. When someone in the Give Back a Smile program comes for an appointment, the whole office gets excited, he says. “I have a great staff,” he boasts. “It’s a good team.” The team includes one of his two daughters, Lorie, who works as the office manager. A team player and a generous boss, Sayeg does things to “make it fun” around the office. “People need to feel appreciated.”



**He wants to continue making a difference in the lives of domestic abuse victims. For the third year, in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, this October, Dr. Sayeg will donate the proceeds from all teeth whitening treatments to Give Back a Smile.**

He has worked on four survivors, one of which was a 15-year-old daughter of crack addicts. First sent to a “Medicaid dentist” who could only remove her front teeth, she was fortunate to be referred to Dr. Sayeg. “She had badly decayed teeth. We did multiple root canals and restorations and bonding on her front teeth, and were able to save her pretty smile.”

The staff brought her clothes and raised money to buy her personal items like shampoo and other toiletries. Even Sayeg’s other patients wanted to help; one donated a hair salon treatment for the girl. “She’s

a very sweet girl who was dealt a very poor hand,” Sayeg reflects. “I felt we made a difference.”

He wants to continue making a difference in the lives of domestic abuse victims. For the third year, in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, this past October Sayeg will donate the proceeds from all teeth whitening treatments to Give Back a Smile. He offers the service to patients at a reduced fee, with their payment going directly to the organization. He encourages other dentists to donate one whitening treatment per year. One smile at a time, Sayeg intends to make a difference in the lives of many. ■

**As in everything he gets involved in, paramount performance is important to him. Dr. Sayeg takes great pride in displaying photos in his office of his prize-winning racehorse, which he shares ownership with friends.**



PHOTOS BY JEREMY ADAMO

Give Back a Smile to a Domestic Violence Survivor

To help give back a smile of a Domestic violence survivor, who has suffered dental injuries you can contact the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry’s Charitable Foundation by calling the GBAS national toll-free number, (800) 773-GBAS (4227).

The GBAS connects the survivor with a local AACD dentist volunteer who provides treatment at no charge to the survivor.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating to the ‘Give Back a Smile Program’ you may call the GBAS national toll-free number, (800) 773-GBAS (4227) or contact Dr. Mark Sayeg by calling 404-255-6782.