

DECEMBER 2020

# WINNETKA KENILWORTH **LIVING**

## **Dr. George Warga**

*Winnetka Dental Arts*

*Pleasure in the Job Puts  
Perfection in the Work*



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Cover photo by Jerry Alt of Alt Imagery

# Meet Dr. George Warga *of Winnetka Dental Arts*

By Paul Clements

Photos by Jerry Alt of Alt Imagery

Dr. George F. Warga is a dentist and so much more. Because he has a very holistic view of his life and his work, he offers patients a unique customer experience that incorporates his passions for education, health, art, philosophy and sound business principles.

Warga's philosophy is heavily influenced by Aristotle's philosophy who not only said happiness depends on ourselves, but also, the whole is more than the sum of its parts and pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.

"The word doctor means teacher and so my first goal is to educate a patient so they are empowered to make the best treatment choices consistent with their individual needs and circumstances. Building trust and confidence in our treatment is the initial goal of the education process," Warga said. "I practice a patient centered approach to dentistry, versus an approach where everybody gets the same treatment regardless of their uniqueness. There is a variance in the skill, judgment and expertise applied to each procedure and that is dependent upon the individual dentist. There is also a variance in the patient's readiness and understanding for what they want."

Dr. Warga's private practice, Winnetka Dental Arts, has been a fixture in the community since 1992. An emphasis is placed on prosthetics, implants, cosmetics, TMJ, restorative dentistry and occlusal (bite) function. In addition to simple and complex restorative dentistry, Dr. Warga offers at home sleep studies to evaluate sleep apnea and snoring and provides oral appliances in lieu of CPAP, clear braces for orthodontics (Invisalign®, ClearCorrect®) and Botox® for therapeutic TMJ and cosmetic facial treatments. He is a national provider of continuing education programs, he lectures and teaches comprehensive dentistry to numerous organizations nationally and internationally, and he founded Lifetime Functional and Aesthetic Restorations educational study groups in Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

Warga credits his approach to one of the foremost innovators in dentistry, Dr. Peter Dawson. Dawson wrote some of the most influential books on dentistry ever written, including *The Complete Dentist*, and his autobiography, *A Better Way - The Surprising Path to a Complete Life*. Dawson was dedicated to helping dental professionals see beyond treating only teeth to address patients' issues with functional, beautiful and long-lasting solutions, as well as to teach them how to lead a happy, balanced life.



"I was thinking about changing my profession after my first three years of dental practice," said Warga, "then I went to a Dawson lecture entitled 'Putting Your Dental Practice in the Top 10%'. That's when I learned that teeth are part of a bigger system. And because there is less competition at the top of the field than there is in the middle, it became clear that investing in myself to learn a holistic approach to dentistry would ultimately develop a significantly more viable and gratifying career. Though it was a large investment of time and expense, I recognized the benefits of reeducating myself as a dentist and as a person. I see less people and do more comprehensive work. Sometimes, the more comprehensive approach can simply mean a greater emphasis is placed on simple preventive care that many patients have not been previously offered."

After attending several years of Dawson's courses, Warga continued his education at the world renowned Pankey Institute for Advanced Dental Training and Education. This curriculum focuses on the technical, behavioral and business aspects of building a thriving practice. Pankey-trained dentists are taught how to treat their patients as individuals, how to do comprehensive examinations, how to take enough time to listen to an individual's needs and answer questions fully, and how to create a practice that reflects their own personal values. Warga has served as a provost and teacher at this not-for-profit institution for more than 20 years including time as

Lead Faculty for week long courses. Through his involvement with the Pankey Institute and as a member of the prestigious American Academy of Restorative Dentistry, Warga interacts with the top international educators on a continual basis and remains abreast on current treatment and technological advances.

"We don't watch things until they become significant problems. Often, by the time pathology shows up on an x-ray, you've probably waited too long. If a patient only calls us repeatedly with emergencies, I do not feel we have done a good job in our education and health mission. We strive to partner with people who want to get healthy which translates into less frequent emergencies. Also, I firmly believe in being punctual out of respect for our patients' time. We work diligently to be on time and that is more likely to occur when our patient base is healthy and, in turn, has less needs for emergency care. We view our office as a preventive, holistic care facility rather than a trauma center."

Warga is dedicated to dentistry and first envisioned to be a dentist during grammar school. "I was born in Chicago and I grew up in Glenview. In grammar school, one of my assignments was to interview my neighbors about their careers, and after a number of interviews, it was apparent to me that the happiest people I talked to were dentists. My parents were always very supportive of my career path and I was very fortunate that they always gave me the confidence that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to. Art, creativity, education and community service were values that my parents emphasized in our household. I went to Loyola Academy and had a strong interest in math and science, and with my interest in art, dentistry seemed like an excellent career fit as it combined my interests."

Eager to accomplish his career goals, Warga graduated in three years from the University of Illinois and after four years of dental school, also at the University of Illinois, he returned to the North Shore and started as an associate for a practice in the Old Orchard Professional Building. Two primary lessons learned from the senior dentist were to be meticulous and to find ways to give back to society.

"More than 10 years ago my office helped launch Pankey Dental Access Days at the Northfield Community Church to provide dental care for people who are less fortunate. Giving back to society and putting others first are an important aspect to creating a balanced life. The Dental Access Days program has continued to grow since its inception and that



has brought me great personal satisfaction. I am very proud of my profession and colleagues who make dentistry available to a broad array of people."

Warga raised his 3 children in Northfield and was very involved in the community. Over a span of 16 years, Warga served on and

was chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, served 2 terms as a village trustee and was very involved in the commercial and residential development of the community. Additionally, Warga was active with the youth sports programs and enjoyed his many years as a coach of his children's soccer and baseball teams.

"I changed my work schedule to accommodate the children's school schedules so I could help out at home. I started offering early morning appointments from 7AM and found many patients preferred coming in before work. Ultimately, I realized I was more efficient by working earlier hours. The parents loved having their children on the teams I coached because I would start our practices immediately after school and that saved them one extra round trip. I truly enjoyed the experience of getting to know many of the children in our community."

Children are also an integral part of his practice. "Oral health starts with physical development in childhood and should be evaluated early on. 80% of brain growth occurs by age 3 and this growth is very dependent upon the airway and oral complex. Development of the jaws and facial structures directly affect the airway development which in turn affects brain development."

"Tongue posture in early childhood during feeding and swallowing is a primary factor in this structural development. Skeletal studies confirm that since the industrial revolution, facial structures in the

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general population are not often reaching their genetic potential in growth. Hence, in industrialized civilizations, it is now common for people to have inadequate airway and sinus development.”

“My message is that many professional health care providers are not adequately evaluating airway competency during this early childhood development. Signs of recognizing these structural deficiencies are crowding of teeth, development of an overbite, labored breathing, mouth breathing, poor sleep patterns, teeth grinding, snoring, allergies, asthma, sinus congestion, hyperactivity and ADHD amongst a number of other maladies. The earlier the structural deficiencies can be addressed, the more successful are the outcomes for a healthy life.”

“So what changed as we industrialized our lives? The simple answer is that we changed our feeding habits and food supply. We do not see crowding of teeth approximately 400 years ago. As breastfeeding was reduced, we see an increase in the incidence of diminished oral and sinus skeletal growth and thereby an increased occurrence of deficient airway development. The combination of an underdeveloped airway with a modern American diet lacking in nutrition creates an unhealthy person. Our predominant farming practices have produced less healthy food that initiate inflammatory responses in our bodies and are disruptive to our gut microbiome. This diet induced inflammatory cascade contributes to breathing disorders which in turn compromises healthy sleep patterns.



Poor sleep increases adrenaline and cortisol production which can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other inflammatory diseases and a compromised immune system. With today's threat of Covid-19, many people are trying to strengthen their immune systems. Because of these intimate relationships between oral development, airway, and nutrition, my practice takes a holistic approach to evaluate these parameters in individuals from childhood through adult life.”

“Studying the temporal mandibular joint complex (TMJ) was my first thrust into developing a comprehensive treatment philosophy. This evaluation is to determine where the jaw seats at rest, similarly as to how a door is seated on its hinges. If the door fits into the door frame properly, the door, frame and hinges will have a longer useful life. Conversely, if there is a misfit of the door and frame or some deficiency in integrity of the hinge, the door, frame and hinge assembly will have a shortened lifespan when used more frequently. The lower jaw is analogous to the door, the upper jaw is analogous to the door frame and the jaw joint is analogous to the door hinge. Hence, when these components fit properly, people experience more comfort and longer lasting teeth similarly to the door analogy. When the teeth no longer have a proper fit, the components of the system start breaking down. The misfit of the teeth can be induced by orthodontic treatment and restorative dentistry such as crowns, implants and fillings. Coming back full circle to the early airway development, we now know that



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people who have compromised airways grind their teeth more often. Grinding of teeth (bruxism) projects the jaw forward to open your airway and is a natural adaptive survival mechanism. That's the magical link. Most people who grind their teeth have a compromised airway and hence apnea. If you subscribe to having periodic physical examinations by your physician, I would advise you have a home sleep test study as well. Our practice's holistic approach incorporates partnering with a third party to provide and simplify the means to do a home sleep study. If needed, we then collaborate with other specialists such as an ENT to develop a treatment course. We have found that many people who were prescribed a CPAP prefer and respond better to our customized oral appliances. I recommend all patients to consider doing at home sleep studies because it is estimated 80% of people with moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnea are undiagnosed and 26% of the population from ages 30-70 suffer from sleep apnea."

If you are considering corrective or cosmetic dental work, Warga says, "dentistry is more than a cosmetic finish- it is very involved in precision and workmanship. Why does a Swiss watch last so long? Because it is machined with precision. When you are getting dental work done, ask yourself how long do you want it to last and how do you expect them to look after a period of time? Form follows function and vice versa. When teeth do not function properly after an esthetic enhancement, whether it be from cosmetic dentistry or orthodontic treatment, the teeth and appearance will ultimately deteriorate. Signs that your teeth are not functioning correctly are migration and chipping of teeth and headaches and jaw pain. To predictably achieve naturally beautiful restorative outcomes that have proper function to ensure longevity, I personally design and create a set of prototype teeth. The patient can

evaluate these customized teeth and have any desired modifications for esthetic and functional needs. Once the prototypes meet the patient approval, we utilize 3-D scanning technology to communicate with a master laboratory technician to finish the restorations. Many dental offices commonly recommend using zirconia for crowns and restorations but I do not usually recommend the use of this material. Zirconia restorations are cost efficient in the short term but due to their hardness, they can readily damage the teeth they function against and lead to undesirable damage to other teeth. My preference is to work with individual master technicians who have the technical and artistic skills to apply ceramic finishes over gold castings for the posterior teeth and gentler ceramic materials bonded to the anterior teeth. I also use a digital 3D scanner rather than traditional dental impressions so we can work in a more precise and highly magnified virtual environment. Utilizing a combination of state of the art technology with precise workmanship, we can confidently provide dentistry that will prove to be a worthwhile investment over time. After 35 years of practice, I am as energetic and excited as ever for being able to partner with patients who are seeking to improve or maintain their health. I believe my practice will continue to evolve as more is known about how our oral health is intimately involved with our general health. All questions and inquiries are welcome and we offer initial consultations at no fee." 

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