2020’s HOTTTEST

Up-and-coming: She is excited about the future possibilities.
The Educator: He is committed to professionalism.
The Strategic Partner: He is enthusiastic about helping people.
Second Generation: He is building the next chapter.
The Couple: They are working hand-in-hand.

Find out why these individuals are the hottest of 2020.
What excites you about what you do?
I love that I can make a difference in people’s lives. I also love being creative and working with my hands.

What industry change would you make if you could?
I would like to see more regulation when it comes to outsourcing to other countries and having a CDT on staff in a lab.

If you could have dinner with three industry peers who would it be?
Valerie McMillan, DDS, MS (@denturequeen) and John McMillan, MDT. They are doing amazing work with digital dentures and truly want to help people. I have been to a couple of Dr. McMillan’s lectures and have always learned something new and gained more excitement for what I do. Second would be MacKenzie (@toothfairyknz). I’ve been following her on Instagram since I’ve been going to school. I would also choose Dan Elfring, Master CDT, TE. I would love to sit down with him and learn all that I can from a Master technician.

Where do you want to be in ten years?
I want to continue volunteering in organizations such as the Indiana and Colorado Mission of Mercy. I would like to keep on sharing knowledge with others. I strive to learn everything in dental technology, especially printing and milling. I want to be the best technician I can be. Life is always changing. I never thought that I would be where I am today, but wherever life takes me, I know I will be happily surprised.

What do you think is the biggest opportunity as the profession moves into the future?
The obvious answer is digital. With crown and bridge so much changed so quickly. At first it was not a great product but over time everything has been dialed in. The same will be seen with digital dentures but I believe the quality is going to get better faster. Overall digital is only going to help us; you still have to have the general knowledge of analog work first. Without a fundamental understanding of form, function, and anatomy, technology is useless. All of this new technology is not a replacement for skilled and knowledgeable technicians.
broke. The materials are so much stronger and the esthetics so much nicer. I get to work with a lot of different types of appliances and patient cases here and it’s a real opportunity for growth.”

Evan’s father would probably be the first to admit that he was sad to see her move across the country; yet he would also recognize that she was raised to go be an adult and explore the world. She is happy where she is at in her career and expresses some hesitancy over opening up her own lab in the future, surprisingly not due to cost but rather the weight of responsibility. At the present moment though, her enthusiasm for the future of digital and 3D printing is contagious and offers a glimmer of hope for the next generation of dental technologists.

“School taught me a lot but it can’t cover everything,” said Evans. “There are real world situations that you just have to learn yourself or have someone with more experience teach you and I am excited to learn. The younger generation simply is not aware of the possibilities that this profession offers. It is a relatively unknown industry and the decrease in schools has greatly correlated to the decrease in technicians. My generation was pushed to get a higher education but with fewer schools offering dental technology, fewer people know about it as a career. As learning a trade is becoming more popular, I am hopeful that more people will learn about dental technology. Low wage does play a part in turning away younger, less experienced technicians, but I think it is going to change as the more experienced technicians retire and the demand increases. As technology becomes more advanced and the need for technicians keeps growing, we will see a rise in wages for the average technician, even for non-experienced technicians. I also firmly believe that higher wages will come with increased industry regulation. The ‘What’s in Your Mouth’ campaign is a great tool to increase awareness.”

She acknowledged that there are a host of problems and issues to be tackled, and it is difficult to pinpoint which one needs to be tackled first. At the same time, she is brightly engaged when discussing how the industry has positively evolved too. As an active social media user, the opportunities that this space offered has undoubtedly left an indelible mark.

“I follow quite a few people on Instagram,” said Evans. ”For instance Alex Alsammarrie @Waxbae - his wax work and set ups are amazing. I aspire to produce something that beautiful. I am also on a bunch of Facebook groups and sometimes there are questions on there about things I never knew even existed. I can ask questions and review other questions and gain knowledge that way. Being on these groups opened up my whole world.”

With this kind of outlook, the world of dental technology just seems brighter.
What excites you about what you do?
The thing that excites me is adapting to the paradigm shift in the industry and helping others do the same.

What industry change would you make if you could?
The industry change I would make is simple: injecting some professionalism back into the profession. In my article, “DIY Orthodontics: The Dental Industry’s Frankenstein Monster (https://assocolp.org/diy-orthodontics-the-dental-industrys-frankenstein-monster),” I write about how digital technology and new materials has in some part facilitated a race to the bottom in some product categories. Case in point, a tool, aligner therapy, was allowed to become a solution.

If you could have dinner with three industry peers who would it be?
The head of the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO), the head of the NADL and the head of the American Dental Association.

Where do you want to be in ten years?
I would like to be retired in ten more years, or an undistinguished professor at a foreign university. I also want to get more involved with the AOLP, education, and the future of orthodontics. I would most like to leave the industry and profession better than what it was.

What do you think is the biggest opportunity as the profession moves into the future?
As the profession moves into the future, I am not quite sure if what I think would be considered “opportunity.” I see the future offering a test of character and ethical obligations to an uninformed public. Orthodontic dental laboratory technicians in many respects have the knowledge and experience to assist our orthodontic clients in the best patient outcomes. We all need to use that skill and knowledge to benefit the patient.

Christopher Gajewski
Owner Bryn Mawr Orthodontic Laboratory, Exton, Pa.
Founder/President Association of Orthodontic Laboratory Professionals (AOLP)

The Educator

Christopher Gajewski has been in the industry for over 30 years. His uncle owned one of the first small orthodontic dental labs in the Washington, D.C. metro area. He took to it naturally at a young age and after getting his degree in Journalism from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla., he returned to the lab. His uncle’s lab worked with some of the top orthodontists who treated the political elite, exposing Gajewski to the best doctors in the DC area. He decided to move to the Philadelphia area in 2003 and bought a lab in 2005.

“It was a different culture back in the early 2000s, with more professionalism,” said Gajewski. “We would get an occasional case from a GP but they were few and far between. Everything changed with technology. After Align came out with Invisalign, I remember ortho lab owners looking at each other and thinking, the technology was patenting processes that we had already been doing for years. I personally thought it was an interesting tool but the doctors and educators allowed the tool to become a solution. The basics of orthodontics did not change, but the doctors did.”

The use of aligner technology has quickly grown within orthodontics, general dentists, and availability to the general public. While the use of invisible trays may be popular, Gajewski has seen a massive increase in relapse cases and is concerned about how the general public perceives this treatment and the notion that clear aligners are a more affordable option.

“Hawleys are the bread and butter of orthodontic labs but there is a reason why they have been the standard of post-treatment care for over 100 years,” he said. “A well-made Hawley will last 15+ years. Invisible retainers need to be replaced much more frequently because they will start to stretch and allow for movement, potentially leading to relapse. Patients need to be informed of post-treatment care and the cost accrued over time.”

He is also hopeful that people will start to understand the long-term value of being treated by an orthodontist versus saving money and trying to do it themselves.

“I have friends and family ask me all the time to fix something, even my own daughter, and my response is to go see a doctor,” he said. “I make aligners
for doctors but I have been in this long enough to know and understand what I do know and what I do not know, and what I believe is that orthodontics should be done by an orthodontist.”

While he understands the financial appeal ortho cases have to a GP, in his experience, a GP is not going to see things the same way as a trained orthodontist. An orthodontist has additional years of specialized training to recognize difficult cases, and what appears to be a simple case can turn into a complicated case very quickly. In response to what he was witnessing, Gajewski decided to take action. He launched the Association of Orthodontic Laboratory Professionals (AOLP).

He said, “I saw where things were headed with technology and all of the possibilities and I saw not only doctors but sales reps and vendors that simply did not know what goes on in an ortho lab. Vendors are trying to supply a need by providing technology but without understanding what we have to do with it. I was invited to speak at the Dental Laboratory Association of Texas conference because they wanted to introduce more orthodontics. I gave my lecture and it hit me that there is such a need to further educate doctors, lab technicians, and the public about orthodontics. I finally took money out of my own pocket, hired a lawyer, formed the association and said ‘here we are.’”

Gajewski is still getting the word out about the AOLP to doctors, laboratory owners and educators. He was recently approached by a few doctors at the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) meeting and they discussed a potential synergy between lab owners, educators, doctors and vendors to help reverse the downward trend in professionalism. The former head of the Italian Orthodontic Lab Association even reached out to him and wanted to attend the AOLP meeting in March. While the AOLP now has a board of directors, Gajewski still struggles with the amount of time and direction the association requires in addition to running his lab. His ideal vision for the future of the organization is to get more people, companies and educators involved.

He said, “We have approximately 70 members, and the Facebook group is more active with 763 members to date. People need more education and we have not done enough to reach out. I would encourage readers to join the AOLP. It is not about the cash. The bigger organizations need to take us more seriously and we need to show them a strong membership. Our conference is coming up at the end of March 2020 and it has been doubling in size every year since we began. Ortho lab owners may call ourselves the unwanted step-children of the dental industry. I, however, would like more awareness and the return of professionalism to the profession and this is a way to accomplish that.”

“There is such a need to further educate doctors, lab technicians, and the public about orthodontics.”

AOLP board members
The Strategic Partner

Rob Mior never even knew what a dental technician was until grade 12. He wanted to be an electrician; his dad was a carpenter and Mior also enjoyed woodworking and being creative. When it came time to apply for college, however, his friend's brother, a dentist, pointed out that he should consider dental technology. After researching what dental technology was, he fell in love instantly and applied for the dental technology program at George Brown College in Toronto. He was one of 25 students accepted out of 150 applicants and graduated in 1993. Immediately upon graduation Mior worked in a dental laboratory for a year.

"It turns out my personality was just too big for the bench," said Mior. "I'm a people-person interested in making a difference, interacting with others, and figuring out problems. I decided to get into sales which gave me an opportunity to learn the industry, meet people, and see how different materials are used in different places to do different things. Sales provided a bigger picture of the whole industry and really showed me what the dental world is."

His first job was as a sales representative. Never having been in sales, the first six months of driving around, knocking on doors and trying to get people to use his product was a shocking experience. Mior duly notes that his dental background helped him to get the job.

"My only saving grace was when I was asked, what is your background," said Mior. "The moment I said I was a dental technician it was an easy conversation. I was embraced quickly because of what I knew and I could speak the language. It became easy to talk to people and develop and build trust because they saw me as one of their own. I have always appreciated this as an opportunity to build my career."

Twenty-six years and three different companies later, Mior is now the Vice President of Technical Sales North America and the GM of Ivoclar Canada. Along the way he immersed himself into all facets of dentistry, engaging with dentists, hygienists, etc. The Strategic Partner - Rob Mior - January 2020 - Journal of Dental Technology - 23
institutions and technicians. He is highly passionate and animated about his favorite part of the gig, the people.

He said, “Working with technicians and the people in this industry is my favorite part of what I do. These are good, grounded people that I can have both conversations and arguments with, and at the end of the day we are all just friends. Partnerships are very important to me. I am very loyal to the industry and if I can make a change or a difference I am there to do it.”

His unswerving commitment to working hard, getting involved, and learning all sides of dentistry has served him well. Today, his days are filled with travel between the U.S. and Canada, talking to customers and dealers, participating in strategy meetings and so much more. He thrives on pinpointing different ways to move the needle in the business, not only for Ivoclar Vivadent as a company but industry-wide.

“There are three words that encompass Ivoclar Vivadent,” said Mior. “Passion, Vision, Innovation. We are passionate about our customers, and are very lucky over the years to emerge as a trusted developer of market-leading materials. Innovation goes hand-in-hand; if you have passion and vision you can develop products that help customers make great restorations and be profitable at the end of the day.

Making people smile is the spirit that inspires our employees to go the extra mile. It’s about developing innovative solutions that allow dental professionals to improve the patient’s quality of life rather than just simply fixing a tooth. The industry itself has changed a lot over the past 26 years with the last ten years seeing the most amount of change. I look forward to being a part of what the future brings.”
When Reed Nunnally was growing up, the idea of being in the family business was not really on the table. When he was four years old his dad, David Nunnally, made a calculated risk and decided to go back to school to earn a dental lab degree. Ever the entrepreneur, David worked hard to create something from nothing. The business required a lot of time and effort away from the family, but in his dad’s eye, the way to show love was to provide and build a legacy. As Reed Nunnally’s life began to unfold, this unwavering commitment appears to be an inherited trait.

While in college Nunnally got into construction and real estate and learned a lot outside of the dental space. During this time his dad encouraged him to take risks, make mistakes, and stumble and fall. When he finished school in 2010 his dad discussed the new technology coming in and asked him to join the family business.

“Not only was this a great business opportunity, but I viewed it as a chance to really get to know my father,” said Nunnally. “We worked hand-in-hand and I learned the way he did things. Even if we did not align, we always had productive dialogue and reached common understandings. He was ready to step back a bit and let me fly to see what I could do.”

Derby was always an early adopter of technology and Nunnally continued with that by capitalizing on the emerging market of zirconia. Within his first year, the company rapidly grew to over 50 employees and was producing up to 50,000 zirconia units per year. Three years into the thriving business relationship, David was diagnosed with lung cancer and almost immediately stepped away from the business.

Nunnally said, “I was very fortunate that I had those few years to learn from his wealth of history. He allowed me to make decisions but still guided me on how to operate. If I can point to my biggest accomplishment, it was that my father could step away and focus solely on his family and health. He trusted me that the business was doing well. That made me proud that I could give that to him.”

In the past few years Derby Dental has undergone significant changes. One major transition has

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**Reed Nunnally**

President, Derby Dental Laboratory, CDL, Louisville, Ky.

**What excites you about what you do?**

My focus is aligners and adapting our traditional lab to our Smile Shaper business. I’ve been fortunate through my father, friends, and membership in TEREC N.A., CNC, NADL and Cal-lab, to develop a great network of friends. Now my friends are my business partners through the aligner business. We work with over 100 labs around the nation and it is exciting to collaborate and successfully grow a product.

**What industry change would you make if you could?**

My change would be convincing labs that when we compete on prices there are no winners; this spans the entire ecosystem of our world from vendor to lab to clinician to patient. When we hold our value and compete on quality and innovation we all win.

**If you could have dinner with three industry peers who would it be?**

To me, dinner should always be with good friends: Stuart Steinbock, Carbon, Justan Koch, Artisan Dental Laboratory, CDL, and Joseph Lee, Friendship Dental Laboratories, Inc., CDL. Although from different walks, they are all common-minded, forward-thinking business people.

**Where do you want to be in ten years?**

I hope to be at a point where we are cutting the path for innovation versus following it.

**What do you think is the biggest opportunity as the profession moves into the future?**

Although lab numbers might be diminishing, the market is not. Competing on commoditized products is not a path to success. Find what you are great at and do not limit yourself. With digital and technology the landscape is more flat. Labs that can narrow product focus and broaden customer base can forge their path to success.
been the launch of their aligner business, Smile Shapers. In a world of commoditized zirconia, seemingly everyone was joining in and quickly catching up and Nunnally wanted to differentiate. He saw growth potential in the aligner market and was enticed by the significant barriers to entry. Not everyone, however, agreed.

“My father had his reservations on the risk and reward,” said Nunnally. “He thought we already had a good thing going. The more we talked though, the more he understood the potential. In some of our last conversations he told me that this would be the next chapter in the Derby legacy.”

After learning the Invisalign patent was expiring, the world of aligners began to unfurl. While at IDS 2017 Nunnally’s focus was to gather information and create a business plan. The European market was ahead of the U.S. and demonstrated the value in becoming an early adopter.

He said, “With regulatory compliance, not everyone can jump in the game. It demands high capital expense up front and a lot of time and paperwork. In 2018 we received the 510k registration for Smile Shapers. We brought in key employees already familiar with the space and strategized how to scale the business. We do wholesale lab-to-lab and they retail to their doctors. With these synergies, doctors get a great product and our lab partners have strong margins with little upfront investments.”

Derby Dental started selling aligners in the fall of 2018 and by spring of 2019 was pushing awareness of the Smile Shapers brand. They have grown from two employees to over 60 in that division alone; as a company they are close to 160 employees. Smile Shapers is not just another product line, it is a stand-alone business with Derby as its parent company. The team being developed is multifaceted and includes engineers, IT professionals, programmers and more.

“We are working on automation,” Nunnally said. “Our goal is to produce over 5,000 aligners a day by the end of 2020. We didn't skimp; we picked Carbon as our printer and we work with quality materials. It is, however, a calculated risk as our pockets don't run as deep as our competitors. We had to scale within our means without risking the overall business, and we are at the point where growth is necessary for us to sustain. This year we will invest over half a million in technology and next year our estimate is to spend between 2-4 million. It is a scary number.”

It weighs heavily on Nunnally that this calculated risk-taking doesn't just impact him, but 160 other families. Yet this is also what pushes him to invest in quality and partner with the right labs and vendors in a sustainable growth strategy. Derby is currently in a 20k sq. ft. building, and by the time this article runs, they will have a dedicated aligner facility that's 31k sq. ft.

He said, “No one provided a roadmap and it is exciting to create our own path, but that comes with learning curves. I know we have a strong product; we just need to manage the growth and meet production demands. As I look forward to the future the idea of the next generation coming into the business would be amazing. My children are only five and seven, so we are still a ways out, but they are around the business and they know ‘daddy makes teeth.’ It is my hope to continue my father’s legacy, to trailblaze my own path, and to set up the opportunity so the next generation can find their own way in the business.”
The Couple

Quint Whipple knew he wanted to be a dentist since he was thirteen years old. He also wanted to understand the dental lab side, so while attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, he worked at a local orthodontist’s office making models. After spending two years in Europe on a church mission, he moved to Arizona and began to work in an ortho lab. He applied for dental school in the mid-nineties but competition was fierce, so he took his lab background and accepted a job as Vice President of Technical Operations for a startup lab in Las Vegas, Nev., part of which allowed him to act as a technical advisor in the clinic at Las Vegas Institute. It was at these positions that he gained a few valuable lessons that have lasted the duration of his career.

“When I started working with Las Vegas Institute I met two of my mentors, Bill Dickerson, DDS, FAACD, LVIM and Ron Jackson, DDS, FAACD, FAGD,” said Whipple. “What I learned was that it is okay to charge what you are worth. I knew I wasn’t interested in producing 60 units a day in order to make money; so I never accepted that lifestyle.”

Working with LVI also gave Whipple the opportunity to work with live patients, seating over 1,000 cases that provided perspective on what patients need and working in the mouth verses on an articulator. After he and his wife, Chelly, decided to move back to Phoenix in 2003, they opened up Phoenician Dental Studio in their home. In 2005 they bought a small building and now have a staff of ten. They are a boutique lab specializing in anterior esthetics and full mouth restorations, and Whipple is not really interested in expanding.

“I will only expand staff to a certain level in order to keep esthetics high,” he said. “I do a lot of internal staff training to get people to the level I want them to be.”

It almost sounds too idealistic; to simply demand higher prices for a high-quality product and expect a profitable business to grow. Whipple, however, has matched his time, money and effort to his philosophy. Most of his clientele has been gained through word of mouth and in the proof of the final product.

Several years ago he made an upper and lower ten for a patient right before she found out she needed

Quint Whipple, CDT and Chelly Whipple

Owners, Phoenician Dental Studio, Gilbert, Ariz.

What excites you about what you do?
Quint: The one thing that excites me is that we change people’s lives by what we do. Even if you only look at models all day, there’s a human behind every one of them. It is awesome to see patients get the results they are after; we can alter their outlook and life perspective.

What industry change would you make if you could?
Quint: I would say the acceptance of ‘good enough’ dentistry. With the race to the bottom there are dentists who switch labs for a $5 difference and their focus is not on the patient, but rather the bottom dollar. Often their hand is forced by insurance, but we need to stop dropping prices to the point where it is hard to pay someone their true value.
Chelly: I would love to see more opportunities for administrative education specific to the team level side of lab operation. Labs are so unique and most business training does not speak to that. As a graduate of NADL University, I was able to better incorporate lab-focused business practices.

If you could have dinner with three industry peers who would it be?
Quint: Gérald Ubassy, The late Russell DeVreugd, CDT. Klaus Müller. Each have made irreplaceable contributions to our industry.

Where do you want to be in ten years?
Quint: I have a ten year plan to be lecturing more and just to be better than what I am today. Staying ahead of changes is crucial to success. I would also like to work more with the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD) and establish a training center at my lab.

What do you think is the biggest opportunity as the profession moves into the future?
Quint: Being able to meld digital and analog together with a phenomenal outcome without compromising.
Chelly: The baby boomers are coming of age. Their esthetic expectations are high and they are living longer. This combined with new technology is creating a need for unique skill sets that didn’t exist just a few years ago.
a double mastectomy. After her surgery, she sent a letter thanking him because she could still look at her smile in the mirror and think she was beautiful.

“That is my why,” he said.

When it comes to his wife Chelly’s involvement in the lab, Whipple’s voice softens. He jokes, calling her his better 9/10ths instead of his better half. Even through twenty-seven years of marriage and four kids, she’s been a solid partner and plays a significant role in keeping the business running smoothly with anything from strategic planning, long-term projects, finances, or human resources.

Chelly serves as the backbone of the business, and one of her biggest assets is her strong intuition. Whipple relies upon her insight and does not balk when she makes a judgment call.

He said, “The night we met, we sat on the back of a Honda Prelude and talked for seven hours. That deep connection has never ceased and is still my greatest thrill. We have certainly gone through personal refining fires, and our ability to communicate through it has made us stronger in both our marriage and business.”

Another driving passion is his membership in the Dental Technicians Guild (DTG). Meeting Von Grow, DTG founder, and getting to know other amazing technicians all around the world has invigorated Whipple.

“I went to IDS in Cologne, Germany for the first time and got tackled by a friend that I never met who lives in Spain,” said Whipple. “I can post a question on Facebook and get a reply back within minutes. Old school technicians never wanted to share what they did, but the problem is that someone’s hands can only do what they know; you have to teach what is possible.”

He also thrives on his participation in the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. He served on the board for seven years, was a member of the education committee, and developed significant friendships and business relationships. Whipple then took his desire to establish worldwide connections to the next level in a most intriguing way.

The military has what is called challenge coins. Whipple decided to borrow that concept and develop coins for the DTG. The coins are printed with a moral compass and come with a challenge to live virtuously and properly.

Whipple said, “As technicians, I felt it pertinent that our moral compass should consist of compassion, self-discipline, fairness, reason, courage, honesty, reliability, humility and integrity. I believe those standards need to be inseparable with business and life. I send these coins to friends from New Zealand to Kosovo to Finland. I was once told that these coins are starting to change the industry by instilling purpose and motivating people to do better. There are some incredible people out there and it is amazing to bring them together and challenge everyone to be better.”