



SUPER RECEPTIONISTS!

KARINE AND SHAHZAADÉE SHARE THEIR MEDICAL TRAINING

When you walk into Great Smiles, the first people you see are our receptionists — Karine Mathurin and Shahzaadee Torry. If you've had an appointment in the last year, you know just how fantastic they are!

Karine has been behind the desk for about 10 months and Shahzaadee started three months ago. Karine is a trained dental assistant. She's an awesome resource for your quick dental questions as well as scheduling. Shahzaadee's background is in medicine. She's currently in school to become a nurse! They make a great team and I can't think of a better pair to round out Great Smiles' philosophy of integrative medical and dental care.

I'm lucky to have two such impressive women in the office, but don't take my word for it: They're both popping into the newsletter to say hi themselves.



Hey, I'm Karine! You've probably met me already or at least seen me in the reception area. Most of my day is focused on our patients, whether that's checking temperatures or verifying insurance.

Like Dr. Weddle said, I'm trained as a dental assistant, but I prefer the business side of dentistry. That's why I applied for this job as a receptionist. I became interested in the dental field very early on because of one of my aunts. When I was younger, she was so mean! She never laughed or smiled and always seemed to be in a bad mood. Then, she went to the dentist to get fillings and crowns done, and she became so different.

The work gave her the confidence to laugh and smile. When I saw that, I knew I wanted to help people transform like she did. I originally went to school to become a hygienist, but I

realized that the business side of dentistry is more my speed. I plan to go back to school to get a business major, and working at Great Smiles has shown me I'm on the right path.

Outside of work, my husband, Tunde, and I like to tackle DIY projects together around the house. He works in construction, and we just made a kitchen island and a DIY closet! Everything looks so nice. If you want to see it, you can watch reels of our projects on my Instagram, @naturallymarlita.

Karine Mathurin



Hello, I'm Shahzaadee, and I love my job at Great Smiles! I chose Great Smiles because I wanted a job that aligned with my goal of becoming a nurse. This was a great fit because Dr. Weddle doesn't just focus only on dentistry: She also helps patients with sleep and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) problems. That integrated approach has let me explore other fields.

I've been interested in helping people ever since my grandma got sick when I was a teenager. She had congestive heart failure and I used to help with her medical needs at home and in the hospital. Through that experience, I became interested in learning more about pain, how to make people as comfortable as possible, and how to understand people through their body language.

Apart from nursing, one thing I'm really passionate about is developing a mentorship program for young girls from ages 8-25. Eight-year-olds are just learning to find themselves and express what they want and need, and they're so impressionable. When I was younger, I was part of a mentorship program, and it was so valuable to me. Today, the director of that program is giving me pointers to start my own!

Other than that, I'm a dog mom to a Lhasa apso named Nolan. He's 9 years old but still acts like a baby, always following after me and jumping on my lap for attention. I hope to see you at the office soon!

Shahzaadee Torry

The Latest Dental Fad: *Natural Toothpaste*

“Natural” personal care products are all the rage, and the trend has reached the dental care aisle. Many manufacturers now offer natural toothpaste as an alternative to the mainstream brands you grew up with. But what are the differences between natural and traditional toothpaste? And what do dentists have to say about this latest fad?

As in many things, the definition of “natural” toothpaste depends on whom you ask. Some people argue that toothpaste is “natural” if it doesn’t contain the foaming agent sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS). Others, however, say that toothpaste isn’t natural if it contains fluoride, an agent used to help strengthen teeth.

Fluoride has long been the subject to debate, but the American Dental Association calls it safe and effective at preventing tooth decay. Most dentists recommend its use and urge people to steer clear of fluoride-free toothpaste. In fact, some brands may even state right on the label that their product doesn’t prevent cavities. Outside of fresh breath, preventing tooth and gum disease is why we brush, so using a toothpaste that doesn’t prevent cavities makes little sense.

SLS-free toothpaste, however, is a different matter. The chemical can irritate some people’s gums or skin. Soap and other cleaning products have caused us to



associate foaming with cleanliness, so most toothpaste manufacturers include SLS for consumers’ psychological benefit — not the health of their teeth. If it bothers you, feel free to ditch it.

Unfortunately, many natural toothpaste brands use charcoal in their products. Researchers with the University of Maryland School of Dentistry have found no evidence that charcoal-based toothpaste is effective or safe. More research is needed, but many dentists will discourage the use of charcoal toothpaste because it may wear down enamel.

If you want to try natural toothpaste, start by considering the ingredients. Among dentists, the consensus is to avoid toothpaste that is made from charcoal, is fluoride-free, or has sugar. SLS-free products, on the other hand, are fair game. When in doubt, read the label carefully before putting a new toothpaste in your mouth. Or even better, strike up a conversation with your dentist during your next appointment.

HIDDEN VACATION GETAWAY GEMS IN THE U.S.

SHH! THIS IS OUR LITTLE SECRET ...

Who says you need to travel abroad for a glamorous or exciting vacation? We have so many incredible spots within the U.S.! From coast to coast, here are three underrated domestic, family-friendly vacation spots you just might be missing out on.

Best for Families:

Broken Bow, Oklahoma

Travel Distance: 3 hours by car from Dallas, TX, or Tulsa, OK

Best Time to Visit: Late spring or fall

Thanks to its location by Broken Bow Lake, you’ll be surrounded by forest and wildlife in almost any cabin or Airbnb you book in the area. The Wildlife Museum, BigFoot Speedway (a go-kart racing track), and Beaver’s Bend Mining Company (a kid-friendly geology center to learn about rocks, minerals, and the area’s mining history) are great attractions on top of the awesome hiking and lakeside outdoor activities available.

Best for Beach Vacationers:

Jekyll Island, Georgia

Travel Distance: 1.5 hours by car from Savannah, GA, or 1.25 hours by car from Jacksonville, FL

Best Time to Visit: Fall

This island used to be a private escape for wealthy families in the 1880s — and it shows. It’s a unique vacation spot on the East Coast for anyone looking for serenity and adventure. With over 10 miles of white sand beaches, and much of it undeveloped, you’ll get a very natural, tranquil experience with excellent seafood and Southern-style dining options.

Best for Quiet Paradise Seekers:

Silver Falls State Park, Oregon

Travel Distance: 1.25 hours by car from Portland, OR

Best Time to Visit: Summer

Oregon is already known for its spectacular waterfalls, but if you want to find a quiet oasis of cascading waterfalls and lush scenery, look no further than Silver Falls State Park. Set off on a 9-mile hiking trail loop named Trail of Ten Falls to see all 10 waterfalls. If you choose to stay overnight, the campgrounds include a gorgeous forested setting with spacious sites, nice bathrooms, and options for tent or RV camping.

These sites often require a little over an hour’s drive, but that’s why they are perfect for quiet and enjoyable vacations. Consider giving them a try!



So, Your Kid Wants a Cellphone

HOW CAN YOU TELL THEY'RE READY?

If your child is like most young kids, they'll probably start begging for a smartphone before they're old enough to have one. The older they get, the more intense the pressure will be to have one, especially as their friends get their own devices. So, when is it time for your kid to have their first phone?

According to Common Sense Media, 53% of kids have a smartphone by the age of 11, and Consumer Reports says that 6 out of 10 parents provide their children with a cellphone when their kids are between the ages of 8 and 12. But there is a wide range of opinions — even tech pioneer Bill Gates didn't allow his children to have a phone until they were 14.

Rather than setting a specific age, experts suggest reflecting on your child's behavior. First, consider whether you can trust them to look after expensive items. If they're prone to breaking, forgetting, or losing things, it's wise to wait to give them a pricey electronic device.

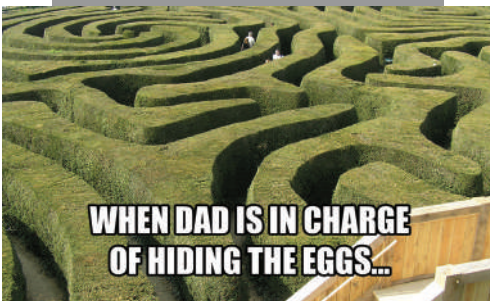
Next, think about how they respond to restrictions and discipline. To protect your children from unsavory aspects of the internet and social media, you should monitor their phone usage, at least while they're younger. Is your child likely to respond well to these parameters, or do they have a history of pushing back on structure? If they have a habit of evading rules, a smartphone is a risky proposition.

Finally, consider their impulse control. Does your child pay attention in class and get their homework done on time, or are they easily distracted? Evaluate whether or not you think your kid could resist using their phone during school or family time.

It's also important to note the difference between smartphones and other cellphones. Though cellphones that lack internet access are increasingly uncommon, they still exist and are sometimes referred to in jest as "dumbphones." If you think your child should have access to a phone for safety or to contact their friends, but don't want them on social media, this is an option worth considering.

Whenever you decide your child is ready, have a meaningful conversation with them about your expectations, responsible use, and the danger of online scams and predators. It's important to give your kid the knowledge they need to use their phone wisely and safely.

TAKE A
BREAK!



One-Pan Chicken Tacos

Inspired by TasteOfHome.com

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb chicken breasts, sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tbsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp cumin
- 2 tbsp chipotle powder
- Canola oil (for frying)
- Corn tortillas
- Grated cheddar cheese
- Pico de gallo and guacamole salsa (to taste)

DIRECTIONS

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the chicken pieces, garlic powder, cumin, and chipotle powder. Mix until the chicken is coated.
2. In a frying pan, heat the oil. When the oil is hot, add the chicken mixture. Cook on medium heat for 5–8 minutes.
3. Remove the chicken from the pan, and add the corn tortillas (avoid overlapping) so they soak up the juices. Flip the tortillas and repeat. Then, add chicken and grated cheddar to each tortilla and fold it over the filling — in the pan.
4. Cook the tacos for 3 minutes per side until the tortillas are crispy and the cheese is melted.
5. Top with pico and guacamole salsa, and serve!

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Pranks the Whole Family Can Enjoy

Outside of social media marketing departments, no one loves April Fools' Day more than children. Unfortunately, too many pranks require extensive planning. Many others are messy, dangerous, or just plain mean. And while some easy pranks exist, you can only get so much mileage out of the same old fake spider.

We've compiled some pranks that are safe, creative, effective, and easy to clean up. Try playing one of them on your kids this year — or help them prank their other parent!

Play with your food by jokingly sabotaging your kids' breakfast. On March 31, fix the kids a bowl of cereal, complete with milk and a spoon, then put it in the freezer. When you place your kids' breakfast in front of them on April 1, they'll be in for a big surprise!

Put a dent in TV time by placing a small, clear piece of tape over the sensors on the remote control. Whether a kid or adult is sitting down to watch, they'll be puzzled when it just doesn't work. This is a great joke for kids to play on their parents, especially if they trick mom or dad into fetching new batteries.

Get topsy-turvy by flipping any pictures, clocks, or other household items upside down while the kids are asleep. You can have a laugh seeing how long it takes the kids to notice

the change. Plus, it could be fun watching them as they try to find all of the upside-down objects.

Give your kids a shock at lunch right when they think it's safe to let their guard down. As you pack their lunch, put googly eyes on every item: the sandwich, juice box, yogurt, apple, and spoon — spare nothing! Your kids and their friends will get a big laugh when they open their lunchboxes. Even better, offer to pack a lunch for your partner and ask the kids for help pulling off this joke.

With these kid-friendly pranks, you can get in on the fun without all of the stress. The only thing you'll have to worry about is how your kids might try to get you back next year!

