

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Doctors Patricia and Cynthia Pauley always knew they'd make a good team. As the first mother-daughter dental team in Washington, the pair have created an award-winning business.

BY STACY BOOTH

Dr. Pat and Dr. Cindy, the mother-daughter dentist team at Brookside Dental in Bellevue, must be doing something right. The pair, along with Dr. Carrie Magnuson and their staff, won the 2005 Small Business of the Year Award from the Better Business Bureau in Western Washington. The dentists accepted the award at a luncheon in February.

"I was so nervous," says Pat.

Her daughter, Cindy, adds, "I was nervous because I was terrified I might actually have to give a speech."

"She gave a great speech," says Pat.

Dr. Patricia Pauley has been perfecting her work since 1979, and was joined by her daughter, Cindy, almost 14 years ago.

"I never thought of not working with her," Cindy says. "I think that in my mind I was always going to work with her."

Adds Pat, "We always sort of knew we'd get along really well."

Pat made a career change to dentistry because she learned the University of Washington was starting to accept some women in dental school.

"I was thinking of pursuing some more education anyway," she says, "and it just hit me that I would like to be a dentist." She explains that she'd always liked working with her hands, and this was another outlet to do that.

Cindy accompanied her mom to dental school and the student lab when she was young. "I picked up my first impressions of what it might be like to be in dental school, at least, so I thought I could at least be in dental school," she says. She later worked in her mom's office in high school and some during college, cementing a decision to pursue a dental career.

"I was really delighted," Pat says of her daughter's decision to become a dentist. "I wasn't sure whether she was going to be a dentist until she was in college, really, and I was really excited that she wanted to go into the same career that I did."

While the practice has been thriving for 26 years (Pat still has her two original patients), it has only been called Brookside Dental for approximately 15 years. In that time, Cindy has built up her own clientele, and Carrie, a former

patient, has joined the practice. Pat's husband, Dr. Gilbert Pauley, also works in the office, managing the Web site (www.brookside-dental.com), doing payroll and other office duties.

This familial environment, the women believe, helped them to win the Small Business of the Year Award.

"When you work with family, then you can each use your strengths to better the business without any competitiveness," says Cindy.

"We're interdependent—we're dependent on each other, but we each have our own area, our own niche that we're responsible for," says Pat.

"And we have complete faith that the other portions are being handled by the others," adds Cindy.

The two have always gotten along well, even through the infamous teen years. Now, working side-by-side, they can consult each other as equals, and both believe this is positive.

"I've been in practice for 27 years," says Pat, "and every person is different, every tooth is different. Every once in a while you get something that is very unusual or that causes a question." With another dentist in the office, she says, "you can consult with them and get another opinion."



Dr. Patricia and Dr. Cindy Pauley



The Brookside Dental staff at the Western Washington Better Business Bureau luncheon.

Cindy says they've learned to departmentalize their life, creating spaces for both the business partner relationship and the mother-daughter relationship. "It's not that much different, it's just different enough that it doesn't seem to be a problem," she says.

Pat believes the relationship has even moved past mother-daughter into an equals relationship all the time. That, she says, also contributes to their successful business. "It just seems to work," she says.

Both women say they find motivation in the patients they have. Cindy enjoys watching the family grow up. Pat likes improving the health of patients and improving their smiles. Both also think the job is just a little bit artistic.

"It's a marketable skill," Cindy says. "It's not the most creative you could ever be, but it's still utilizing a creative element and that's pretty neat."

When the pair isn't practicing dentistry, they relax by playing tennis at the Club and spending time with family and friends. Pat and her husband have fun attending arts events, and Cindy says she loves spending time with her two boys, Tyler, 2½, and Jordan, 10 months. "It's been really fun to think of new and creative ways to keep my boys entertained," she says.

Although her boys are still very young, Cindy says if they followed in her footsteps, she would be more than happy for them to join her in the practice.

"It's interesting because my husband (Dr. Brian Cave) is a dentist and I don't think that we would choose to work together because we don't have similar management styles," she says. "That leads me to believe that if (her children) really wanted to (work with a parent), it would kind of depend on the personality."

For now, Cindy and Pat keep working to improve their business and customer service. While Pat works to bring in the latest dental technology, Cindy works to provide clients the best customer service available.

"We try to treat our patients like they're the reason we're here," says Cindy. "You don't find that everywhere. We try to work on knowing everyone's name when they walk in the door and greeting them by name."

Their attention to service has paid off, not only in their BBB award, but in client comments. The office once received a letter from a patient saying his experience at Brookside Dental was wonderful—it ranked second only to Starbucks.

Keeping it Kid-Friendly THE TEDDY-BEAR CHAIR

Cindy and Pat Pauley are always working to improve their business, be it with new technology or better customer service. The duo also wants to make a client's experience at the dentist's office as pleasant as possible, even for the youngest patients. That goal led them to the teddy-bear chair.

"That was a brainstorm a long time ago," says Cindy. "We were talking about the fact that wouldn't it be neat if kids could sit in a chair that was more friendly looking?"

They started listing animals they could create out of a dental chair, and settled on a teddy bear. They provided a sketch to a man who builds dental chairs, and the teddy-bear chair was born. The women even got a patent on their chair.

"We call the whole room the teddy-bear room ... It's just one more tool to put kids at ease," says Cindy.

"As a kid, when you come into a room with a chair for you and a room that has kids' stuff in it, you're going to feel a lot better about going to the dentist," says Pat.

The teddy-bear room is decked out for children, with soft balloon letters spelling out greetings and friendly stuffed animals (each with a perfect set of chompers) on a bookshelf. The chair is the highlight of the room, a brown, smiling teddy bear ready to "hug" the children as they have their teeth cleaned.

Once in a while, an adult will have to sit in the teddy-bear room when the other chairs are full, and, Cindy says, "They enjoy their time in the teddy-bear room." No adults have requested the room, yet.



Cindy's son, Tyler, 2½.

