

TAGD

# TEXAS GP



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## 2005 LONE STAR DENTAL CONFERENCE ISSUE



SEPTEMBER 9-10 ★ AUSTIN, TX ★ AUSTIN RENAISSANCE HOTEL

## ▶ MAKING DAYCARE A PART OF YOUR PRACTICE

When Drs. Ada Tiller and Juli Powell decided to have onsite childcare at their practice, they made not only their lives easier and brighter, but also the lives of their employees. "When the children come in we all enjoy it, we all get to say hi to them — it brightens our day a little bit" said Dr. Tiller.



Caretaker, Kristen Tritle with the doctor's children in the daycare.

The program was started by the doctors eight years ago when they were trying to find a way to balance motherhood with a busy patient schedule. An onsite daycare facility for their children and their employee's children seemed to be the perfect solution to dealing with the demands of motherhood and the unpredictability of a doctor's schedule. During the school year, one caretaker is on site from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. and during the summer months when the children are out of school a second caretaker is added. Currently there are eight children in the program ranging from age two to eight. Because of the variance in age, the caretaker handles the toddlers in the morning, picks up the pre-school children at lunch, takes them to the office to have lunch with their moms and picks up the school aged children after school. Throughout the day, the children play in their room at the office and take various fieldtrips with the caretaker.

The doctors converted the back two rooms of their office into a small daycare facility with a kitchen, bathroom, crib room, and play area. Because they rent space in an office building there was no suitable spot to designate as an outside area making it not possible to register their daycare. By law,

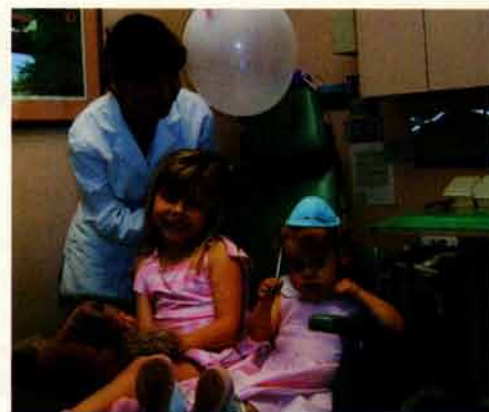
employees can only bring their children to the daycare two days a week because it is not registered, but the doctors are still able to bring their children each day. According to Dr. Powell, "It is not cheap to have this set up, but it is worth it. I like seeing their faces and knowing that they are safe and close to me", "You get to see all of your children's firsts" adds Kelli Whitford, a hygienist in the office, whose two children are in the daycare program. "The first tooth my daughter lost, she came and got me and I almost cried!"

Benefits of being there for these moments weighed heavily on Kelli's decision to take the position at Dr. Tiller and Powell's office. Kelli started the position only three months after having her first child. "The childcare was a big factor in taking the position — it's been wonderful and it has made my kids very comfortable to have me so close to them." Employees contribute to the cost of the daycare at a daily rate, but the doctors absorb most of the cost for the program and they feel that it has been worth every penny. As Dr. Tiller explains, "When the children are sick I can bring them in instead of having to miss a day of work or worry about them with someone else. Even when they aren't sick I can check in on them and I don't feel as far away. I know they like having us close to them as well — it just makes me feel like a better mother!"

If you would like to start a similar program in your office or have any questions for Dr. Tiller and Dr. Powell about their program please contact them at 512- 218-1130.



Children attending the "Bear Birthday Party" get ready to eat a piece of cake.



Dr. Juli Powell with Dr. Tiller's daughter and hygienist Kelli's daughter.

### Making the Dental Experience Fun!

Dr. Tiller and Dr. Powell also have a unique approach in their "Bear Birthday Party". To celebrate their lobby bear's birthday, the dentists throw a party and invite the young children of their patients who have not yet been to the dentist. They have been holding the event for eight years in the hopes of introducing young children to the office in a fun setting. "It makes coming to the dentist fun and not scary for the children", said Dr. Tiller, "For the parents, they get to have a child that actually wants to go to the dentist — it is much easier on them when they get ready to take them to their first appointment."

To help familiarize the children with the dental office and the dental supplies, the office is decorated with gloves blown up like balloons, the children wear masks as party hats, and they get to "take a ride" in the dental chair. Each child is put in a dental chair while the seat is put up, down, back, and forward. When the child comes in for their first visit and the seat is put back to begin the exam they equate it with fun and not fear. The doctors feel that they are helping to develop children that will not grow up with a phobia of going to the dentist and will get help when they need it. "It works", said Dr. Powell, "When the kids come back to the office, it is a much more positive experience for both child and parent." In addition to the activities, cake is provided and goodie bags with a toothbrush, toothpaste, and floss are handed out.