

A molar crisis turns into a Christmas blessing

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To the Editor:

I appreciate the space you are providing me to write this public letter of thanks. On the day before Christmas Eve, I unexpectedly broke in half one of my molars. Nothing of this magnitude had ever happened to my teeth before — except in nightmares in which one by one my teeth would somehow fall out of my mouth. But then it seemed like it was the beginning of one of these nightmares coming true.

I know, I know, this happens to people every day, but not to me, and to put it mildly, I was flipping out. The dentist I have gone to for 15 years is located in the West End of Richmond. A far drive for a Dinwiddie resident, I know, but he was much closer when I lived in Carytown, and I never really had reason to switch. So I called him, and all I got was his answering machine. Was his office closed for the holidays already? Would anyone get back to me before Christmas? I couldn't take a chance, so I called a friend who recommended J. Keller Vernon, D.D.S., a dentist located on Dimmock Parkway in Colonial Heights, around the street from Wal-Mart. I knew it was a long shot, but I called and explained that I've never been to them before, half my tooth was in my hand and I know it's the afternoon before Christmas Eve, but could you please help me — even temporarily — to get through the holidays.

Very much to my surprise, they said come on in. They said I might have to wait a bit since I didn't have an appointment, but they would see what they could do. Willing to wait until midnight if I had to, I rushed over there and signed in, convinced that at a minimum a crown, and perhaps even a root canal, was in my future. And the rest of what happened is the real reason for this letter. As luck would have it, I happened to choose the only Tri-Cities (and possibly all of Southside VA) dentist that had new technology called CEREC (or Chairside Economical Restoration of Esthetic Ceramics), that is a revolutionary way to restore damaged teeth like mine.

Get this, in a single visit and for less than the cost of a crown. Oh, and my (partially) new tooth looks identical to my real ones, and there's a good chance it will last the rest of my life. Dr. Vernon, her CEREC technician, Jenny, and a number of other office staff who all probably had last minute Christmas shopping to do and families to get home to voluntarily stayed a little later than usual to help me fix my broken tooth and enjoy the rest of the holiday season. To say that I am grateful is an understatement, and as for my dentist in Richmond. . . though he's served me well for 15 years, I think I found a practice closer to home that I will be switching to. Happy New Year to all.

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