

A photograph of the exterior of the Northwest Family Dental building. The building is a two-story structure with a tan upper section and a brick lower section. Two large, illuminated signs are mounted on the upper section, each featuring a logo with a yellow sun and blue waves, and the text "NORTHWEST FAMILY DENTAL". The entrance is visible through large glass windows and doors. The sky is blue with some clouds.

TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

Written by Sarah Ristorcelli
Designed by Ashley Cameron
Photos by Dawn Boomsma

DESIGN TEAM

Lead Installation Technician:
Mark Mazurkewycz

Installation Technicians:
Ray Browning
Dan Blackwell
Dennis Borer
Marc Hohenfeldt
Ed Morris

Equipment Specialist:
Trevor Kelley

Sales Representative:
Chris Elliott

Senior Interior Designer:
Inga Paul

As Northwest Family Dental of Saint Joseph, Missouri grew and ultimately merged with another group, the non-profit, community-owned practice needed a new space that would accommodate its high volume of patients and provide breathing room for the staff. The unconventional—and brilliant—choice they made next reveals how innovative thinking can lead to great results, even on a budget.

Saint Joseph's old ALDI supermarket is now unrecognizable, having been completely transformed into the new office of Northwest Family Dental. The practice, which specializes in serving patients with Medicaid (largely children and the elderly) and uninsured patients who pay on a sliding scale, wanted a larger office to keep up with their community's demand for low-cost dental care. Northwest's merger with Patee Youth Dental Clinic also prompted the move: what was previously just a desire for additional space was now a necessity.

While Northwest Family Dental's new space might not be conventional, it is certainly both beautiful and functional. The former ALDI building had been sitting empty, and it was the right size for Northwest's needs. After leasing the building, the practice embarked on the remodel.

Says Northwest's Chief Dental Officer Dr. Nicole White, who first started with the practice in 2008 and was present for the move, "I don't think it's a traditional build-out, but it covers all the needs of

what we're trying to do, which is care for the community. We get a lot of comments on what we've done, because it used to be a grocery store, and patients can't believe how it has changed."

One of the most pronounced improvements that impacts day-to-day work in the office is the number of operatories, all of which are well-equipped. The previous office had seven operatories, compared to the current twenty. The office is always bustling with people—each provider sees twenty to twenty-five patients per day—and there's hardly a lull during open hours. It's hard to imagine, then, what it was like for the patients and a staff of four dentists, two hygienists and twelve assistants when they were cramped in their previous, much smaller location.

"We love our new space. It's just amazing what having some room and being more comfortable does for our team members," says White. "Before, we had a tiny break room that we barely fit in. Also, team members were sharing offices that weren't big enough to share. The space



The completely transformed entry bears no similarity to its former life as an ALDI supermarket.



Each operatory's simple, compact design provides a cozy feel in the midst of the large main office space.

You'd never know from looking, but not all of the operatories feature new equipment. The team who installed the office succeeded in creating a uniform look.



people work in has a natural impact on the way people feel about their job and how we care for patients, so the change has been beneficial not just to us, but our patients."

Dental Assistant Robin Buntin jokes that they play Marco-Polo in the office because it's so big. "And, I clock three miles a day on my pedometer," she says.

The interior installation of dental chairs, cabinetry and other equipment was overseen by Goetze Dental Lead Installation Technician Mark Mazurkewycz, who stopped by the site every week for the duration of the two-month project. "The best layout for the office wasn't obvious at first, but the designer helped develop one that's similar to the previous office, but with a lot more rooms," he says.

Once a layout was agreed on, the

challenge for Mark was to incorporate a mix of products: existing dental chairs from the previous office, three donated chairs, and three new Midmark chairs. The old cabinetry was taken apart and moved over to the new space as well.

"Usually, everything that goes into a new office is new, but in this case we had to work with an unconventional set of items to keep the project on budget. Because this office is a non-profit, community-owned organization, budget constraints were a reality we had to keep in mind every step of the way," explains Mazurkewycz.

Once the new space was prepared, the physical move happened over a two week period during Christmas 2013, when Mazurkewycz, his contractors and the Northwest Family Dental team joined forces to deconstruct the old office and bring the new one to life.



Northwest's dental assistants rave about the speed and ease of the new Statim G4 touch-screen sterilizers.

The staff at Northwest aims to convey a positive attitude, and a sunny color palette in the operatories and throughout the office ups the cheer factor.





The design of the operatories offers a level of privacy as well as easy access for patients and providers, which is important due to the high volume of patients.

The staff agrees that the move was hectic yet fun. All hands were on deck, even on the weekends, to make the move happen swiftly. White describes the willingness of the team to give so much as being consistent with the practice's mission. "We really want to be of service. We want to pay it forward and help those who need it most. As someone who grew up with very little, I'm especially sensitive to the needs of our patients and have led my team to view themselves as partners in doing good," she says.

White found Mazurkewycz's contributions to be fundamental to the success of the build-out: "Mark is awesome, and he did a phenomenal job. To have the talent to take apart and reinstall all these chairs from one week to the next is amazing."

Buntin points out some of the new equipment that has improved the practice. "The Statim G4 sterilizer is so

fast, and it has a touch screen, so all the assistants love it."

A Versa Tilt was also installed to accommodate patients in wheelchairs. "Since we do have quite a few disabled patients, the Versa Tilt makes it so much more comfortable for them to receive treatment," says White.

Northwest Family Dental's choice of transforming an older building to meet their needs rather than constructing a new one made smart use of existing resources and materials. Their grocery store renovation—where many of their patients used to shop—has been met with such a positive community response that it's a model for other practices to consider.

As Northwest's patients are fond of saying, "We're not in ALDI anymore."



The providers at Northwest Family Dental no longer squeeze into shared offices. Now that they have their own spaces, organization and job satisfaction have improved.



The x-ray equipment in the two pan rooms has been updated to the latest technology. Doubling up x-ray capability helps the staff stay on schedule.

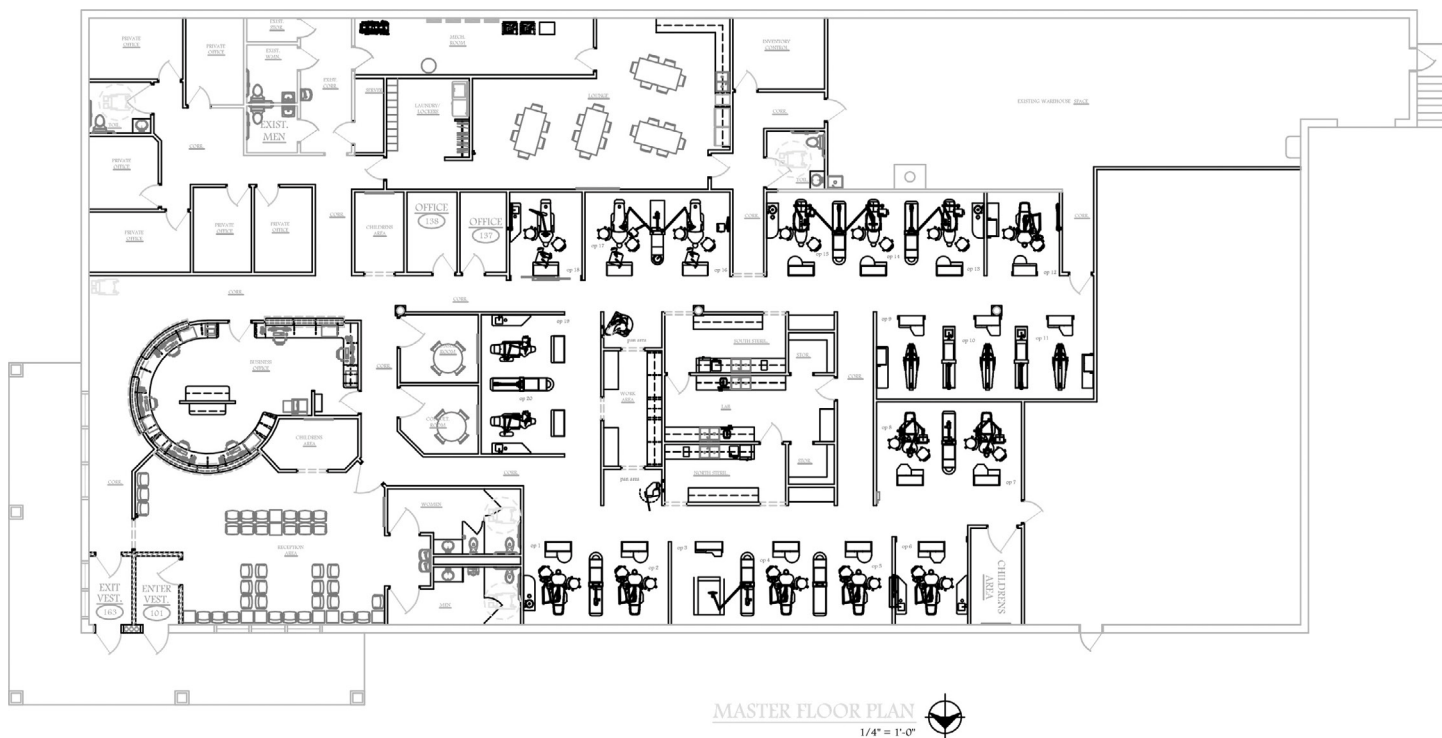


A Versa-Tilt wheelchair lift makes exams more comfortable for the many disabled patients served by Northwest.



The consultation room, with a comfortable round table and hardware for presentation materials, is a dignified environment for providers and patients to discuss dental health.

FLOOR PLAN



NEW EQUIPMENT LIST

Air Techniques Mojave 4V5 Vacuum System
Air Techniques AirStar 70 Air Compressor
Air Techniques Control Panel
Air Techniques ScanX 10
Instrumentarium Imaging OP30 Panoramic X-ray
Marus Nustar Dental Chairs
Marus MaxStar Orbit Deliveries
Midmark ET4370 Treatment Stations
Midmark RS5800-L Side Sink Station
Midmark RS5800-R Side Sink Station
Midmark RCS104 Central Stations
Progeny Preva X-rays
SciCan Statim 5000 G4

CONTRACTORS

Lehr Construction
The Waldinger Corporation



Because each provider sees about 25 patients per day, the reception area is often full. Having ample seating is important for keeping patients comfortable.