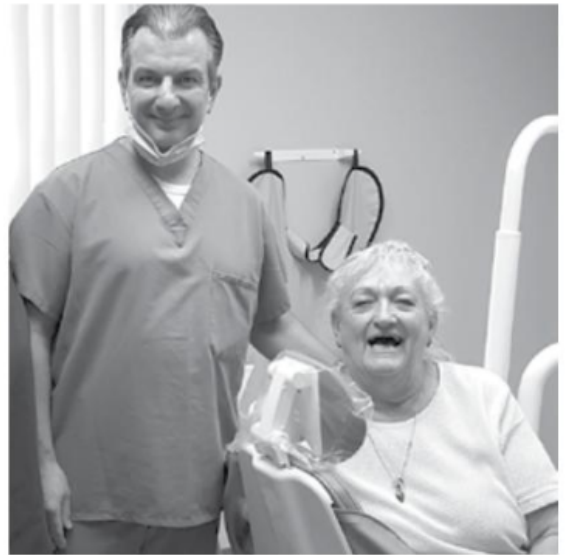


VILLAGE



Photos from Senior Dreams Come True

Above, Dr. Harry Boutis, Denise Marino, and Janet Russell and Melissa Negrin-Wiener from Senior Dreams Come True are all smiles after Marino's new dentures were ready. Right, Boutis and Marino before the dentist began her denture work.

Stony Brook dentist brings the smile to a dream

BY RITA J. EGAN
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Thanks to Stony Brook dentist Dr. Harry Boutis, Denise Marino, 75, can smile again after the dentist donated his services to replace her dentures.

The two were connected through the elder law firm Genser, Dubow, Genser & Cona's Senior Dreams Come True program, which grants the wishes of low-income seniors. Marino, a former corrections officer and great-grandmother, said her 45-year-old dentures, top full and bottom partial, were extremely worn down, and when she heard that her wish to get new dentures was going to be granted she was thrilled.

Boutis, who helped with a previous wish, said he became involved with the program through his patient Melissa Negrin-Wiener, a partner in the Melville law firm and one of the founders of Senior Dreams Come True. Marino said she heard about the organization from her niece, who told her all she had to do was write a letter to the nonprofit.

"I was very surprised, and I thought, 'Gee, I'll try it and see what happens,'" she said in a phone interview.

Marino said before receiving the new dentures she was hesitant to smile, and it looked like she didn't have any teeth and her top lip was sinking in. Boutis, who has been practicing dentistry for 23 years, said a full set of teeth is required for much more than smiling.

"Having a full set of teeth is of the utmost of importance due to function for chewing and eating, facial support and soft tissues, and just as importantly the patient's mental well-being and self-confidence," the dentist said.

Boutis said Marino needed to visit the office eight times for appointments that lasted 30 to 45 minutes long. During the time Senior Dreams Come True was helping Marino get her dentures made, the great-grandmother said she was also having car problems so the firm's legal assistant Janet Russell would pick her up and take her to all her appointments.

Marino, who raised six children and got her first dentures when she was 30, said she is a "chicken" when it comes to going to the dentist but Boutis made her visits pleasant ones.

"Dr. Boutis is such a wonderful, wonderful man," she said. "He makes you feel so comfortable and he talks to you, and he's just a real person."

Marino said after receiving her new dentures she can't stop smiling.

"It's so wonderful to have teeth," she said. Boutis said he was also pleased with the outcome.

"I was ecstatic with the result we achieved for Denise," the dentist said. "Being such a nice person that she is, her happiness and new smile are the rewards that make practicing this profession what it's all about," the dentist said.

Negrin-Wiener said Senior Dreams Come True started after she and her fellow elder law attorneys, who are involved with many different medical causes such as Alzheimer's research, realized there weren't any organizations to raise money for seniors' basic needs.

The lawyer said in order for a person to qualify for a wish they must be over 65 years old, and a couple cannot make more than \$2,000 a month and a single person can make no more than \$1,500. The organization just asks the hopeful wish-recipient to write a paragraph about his or her life, and they also look for people who have been involved in their communities.

She said when it comes to requests, "They aren't asking for lavish things."

The attorney said people have wished for simple items such as mattresses and ramps, and dentures have been a popular request. She said the program will even help pay for a trip, which was the case with a Smithtown woman who couldn't afford to go see her new grandchild.

The program also brought Marino's car to a mechanic to get it repaired. Negrin-Wiener said there are no limits on the amount of granted wishes one can receive.

"We fundraise throughout the year, and

we grant wishes on a rolling basis," she said. "It just depends what the wishes are, if we get help from the community. What we are able to do financially in that point of time."

Marino said she has been telling everyone she knows about Senior Dreams Come

True and handing out pamphlets.

"I couldn't have done it without them, because I'm on Social Security," Marino said. "I just get a little over a \$1,000 a month to live on, and what they've done for me is just amazing. They're my little guardian angels."

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