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STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT TEETH (PLUS A DOSE OF HUMOR)

Father-Son Orthodontic Team: 20,000 Patients, Millions of Smiles

(ISSUED MAY 2011) -- Together they've straightened an estimated 600,000 teeth residing in the mouths of some 20,000 people.

"They" are Dr. Robert Chavez and Dr. Andrew Chase -- one of a very few father-son orthodontic teams in Greater Boston. From one office in Stoughton that Dr. Chavez opened 37 years ago, the duo has grown the practice into ARCH Orthodontics, a group of seven offices south of Boston, stretching from Hyde Park to Attleboro. The award-winning Chavez, who earned his Doctorate in Dentistry at Howard University, also is an Associate Surgeon at Brigham & Women's Hospital. Chase earned his Dental Doctorate at Boston University. Both are involved in Operation Smile worldwide, as well as several local charities.

"We must be doing something right. Maybe the stars are in *alignment*," Dr. Chavez says with characteristic deadpan delivery. Paraphrasing ARCH's website, he says, "Our team treats every patient with the highest level of compassion, respect and *admiration*. We aim to make each patient's office visit the greatest part of their day -- with the goal of providing extraordinary results and amazing smiles."

While initial exams may occur when children are about age 7, orthodontic work for girls usually doesn't begin until ages 10-15 and for boys, it's ages 11-16. But surprisingly, in the past decade, people of all ages opt for orthodontic work. "Our oldest patient is 82," says Dr. Chavez.

"Today, we have patients in their 30s and 40s whose teeth have shifted, or maybe they want 'touch-ups,'" Dr. Chavez notes. "There could have been issues previously, but now these people are working and have insurance so they can afford to take care of things that have bothered them for a while. We also see people who are focused on comfort, function and aesthetics. For example, brides and bridesmaids start planning for weddings -- and photos -- six months in advance."

Orthodontics isn't just about aligning teeth any more. Often general dentists refer patients to Drs. Chase and Chavez to address periodontal disease, tooth loss, and TMJ disorder that can cause severe jaw pain and headaches, often due to tooth misalignment.

"Kids with braces used to be called 'metal mouth,'" Dr. Chavez smiles. "But now we have choices: clear metal, behind-the-teeth designs, and invisible braces including Invisalign® and the new ClearCorrect® style that uses a series of clear, custom, removable aligners. Over time, each aligner moves teeth a little bit until the teeth are straight. "You can't rush perfection," he says, "and perfect smiles are our goal." ARCH Orthodontics offers free initial consultation including digital photos and panoramic x-rays. For more info: www.archorthodontics.com / 1-800-28-SMILE.

- By Stanley Hurwitz / 508-269-0570