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A Young Woman's Endeavor: Creating a New Dental Office

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Charmen Brummer and Dr. Julia Hoang
Photo Sophie Braccini

Julia Hoang set an objective for herself as she finished dental school: buy someone's practice within four years. But life sometimes takes a different path. After working for a few years in someone else's practice in Orinda, she could not find anyone ready to retire - the usual way to become independent. So Hoang chose a slightly harder path: starting a new practice from scratch in nearby Moraga, with cutting edge equipment, and the energy and enthusiasm of a brave young heart.

"It seems that dentists are delaying their retirement plans and I could not find someone in Lamorinda ready to pass the baton," says Hoang. Deciding to create a new practice became the only alternative. "It's something you can't do alone. In order to succeed you need to have the right team," says the dentist.

One of the first people who helped her is Charmen Brummer, a dentistry equipment specialist who's navigated the route to creating a new practice with other dentists all over the Bay Area. "We have been working together for a year and a half," says Brummer, "even before Julia had a space."

"I didn't know where to even start. Charmen put together my broker, my attorney and even helped work with Wells Fargo Bank," adds Hoang. "I couldn't have done it by myself; you need a support system."

Hoang chose to lease 1,600 square feet in the business condo building across from the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, at 533 Moraga Road. Her space on the second floor opens onto a balcony, the rooms are large and full of light, and when in the chair, all you see are trees on the Moraga hills and the sky.

"What is nice when you open a new practice is that you start fresh and you can choose cutting edge equipment. You don't have to rely on old technology," says Hoang. "My purpose is to give the most information possible to my clients, educate them and make the best decisions together."

Hoang believes that attitudes and thoughts about dentistry have changed a lot over the last 20 years. "Nowadays we know that what's best for the tooth is your natural material, so we cut much less," she says. "The patients have also changed. They are more aware of their health and want to be involved in the decision making, so I have installed equipment that will help to visualize and educate." When the patient is in the chair, he/she can see their own X-ray on a large screen to their left, and Hoang explains how to read it.

"I also have a small intra-oral camera the size of a pen that can take pictures and films inside the mouth," she adds. "It has a dual purpose: it gives easy to read information to the patient, and it also shines fluorescent light on a tooth to reveal the structure and possible decay."

Other state-of-the-art equipment includes a Panorex X-Ray machine that can capture whole mouth images with no film put in the mouth, in one sitting. "It has a very low radiation level, it gives the dentist complete information, and is very convenient for children, special need patients and of course everyone else," says Hoang.

While she installs the new office and trains her assistants, Hoang continues to work part-time in Petaluma. "The banks work with doctors with dental-specific loans, but they like to see a doctor who maintains a current practice," says Hoang. "It is a lot of work, but it is worth it."

Hoang is checking every aspect of her new space, from the latex-free environment to the paperless office and the Mojave Dry Vacuum. "Julia (Hoang) has invested a little more money in this device that is used to create jets and suction for the patient's mouth," says Brummer. According to Hoang, a normal water vacuum wastes thousands of gallons of water just to create the vacuum. The device she chose uses only a fraction of that.

"Dr. Julia is a fabulous, trustworthy, meticulous dentist," says Orinda resident Ksenija Olmer adding that she will drive to Moraga to continue seeing her. Hoang says she takes all types of insurance and that she's maintained her network of referrals with specialists in the area. She started taking new appointments at the end of July. She can be reached at (925) 247-5343.

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[back](#)

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