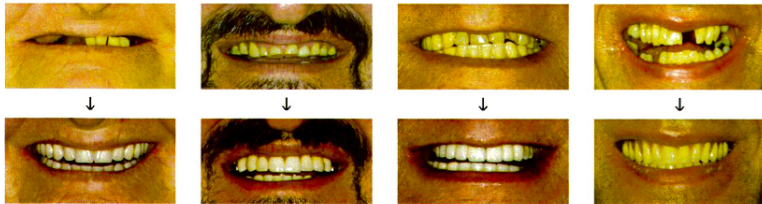


# READING EAGLE

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## Something to SMILE about

Dr. Andrea Smith is a maxillofacial prosthodontist. Her specialty is repairing or replacing missing or damaged teeth.



COURTESY OF DR. ANDREA SMITH

By MATTHEW NOJIRI  
READING EAGLE

**N**OT MANY people know what a prosthodontist does.

Even fewer people know what a maxillofacial prosthodontist does, said Dr. Andrea Smith.

Smith of Wyomissing is one of just 350 people worldwide who work in this very specific medical specialty. When she talks with her family and friends about what she does, she can almost see the question marks float over their heads. She's even made a Powerpoint presentation and has a "jewel box of teeth" with examples of crowns, veneers and dental implants she can pull out to help explain her work.

"No one knows what it is," she said of her specialties.

Smith graduated from Exeter High School and was at the top of her class at Penn State and then Columbia University's College of Dental Medicine. From there, she went on for four more years of training at UCLA's advanced prosthodontics and maxillofacial prosthetics programs.

Earlier this year, she opened her practice, Berks Prosthodontics, in West Reading. She said she's excited to bring her training in treating com-

plex dental problems to the area. Her specialties may seem opaque at first, but they are driven by a core principle of attention to detail, she said.

Many of her patients start out with high anxiety. They are missing teeth, have ground them completely down to nothing or simply need a complete restoration.

She said it's important for those patients to remember that their upside can still be very high.

"A whole new smile can totally change your outlook on life," she said. "Being able to smile when you couldn't before is a wonderful thing."

### About her new practice

Smith works with the complex cases, and her Berks practice will focus on prosthodontics.

That specialty is about restoring or replacing teeth using dental implants, crowns, bridges or dentures. For patients with missing teeth, the procedures are cosmetic, but they also make a big difference in quality of life just by improving how their teeth work.

She treats a wide spectrum of patients. Her patient case varies from older people who have been grinding their teeth their whole life to younger adults who need to replace

their crowns years after a traumatic accident.

Loreen Dietz of Unionville, Chester County, found Smith through her dental insurance company when she needed to replace her front crowns after a bicycle accident she suffered years ago. She said the process of designing the treatment plan, which included four crowns that hook into an implant, took about a year and wrapped up a few weeks ago.

"She was a perfectionist about it, and it turned out wonderful," Dietz said. "She took the time to do it right."

Smith said she enjoys getting to know her patients as they develop a treatment plan. She said the process takes time because working with crowns, dentures, bridges and implants requires a lot of precision.

"Whenever you're making someone's smile, especially if you're making it from scratch, you're trying things in, you have to make sure everything is really harmonious with their face," she said. "It's always a unique process. Every patient is different and has different needs and different things that they want."

### In Lancaster

Working with teeth is just part of what Smith does.

In Lancaster, she is the clini-

### About Berks Prosthodontics

**Hours:** Currently open on Fridays, but an additional day will be added next year.

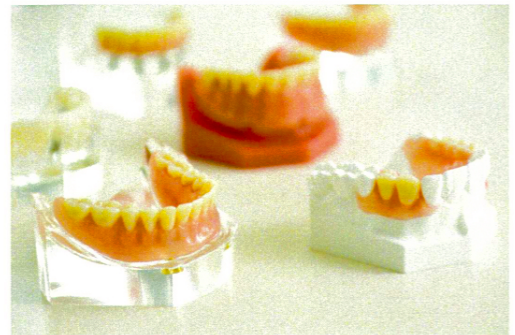
**Where:** 616 Reading Ave., West Reading.

**For more information:** Call 484-577-3530; visit [www.berksprosthodontics.com](http://www.berksprosthodontics.com); or send questions to [berksprosthodontics@gmail.com](mailto:berksprosthodontics@gmail.com)



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Dr. Andrea Smith, an Exeter High School graduate, in the office of her prosthodontics clinic in West Reading.



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### Models of teeth.

cal director and head of the department of maxillofacial prosthodontics and prosthetics at the Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic.

There, she collaborates with a team of specialists, creating facial prostheses for patients who need them due to congenital defects, cancer or trauma.

She said working in this field gives her a chance to embrace her artistic side outside the scope of normal dentistry. Some of her favorite work happens in the lab, making molds of noses, eyes and ears.

Her Berks practice is currently open on Fridays, and Smith plans to add additional days as it grows. Still, she hopes to continue her work in Lancaster because it is always fulfilling to help patients regain or improve their ability to swallow, talk and chew.

"For these patients, it's really rewarding," she said. "It's great for them. It's also rewarding for us to see them."

### Access and anxiety

As she starts her new practice, Smith acknowledges restoring a smile can be an expensive proposition.

There are some barriers that prevent patients from getting their teeth fixed or ever visit-

ing the dentist's office in the first place. The biggest one is insurance.

Dental insurance plans typically have a low cap that restricts how much an insurer must pay. It's up to the patient to make up the difference, Smith said.

She said that's a discussion she will have very earlier on with her patients.

"I usually tell them it's an investment in your health, in something you use every day," she said. "You smile with it, you chew with it. You interact with people every day with your teeth."

"Not everyone wants to invest in that, but a lot of people do."

She said there can also be high anxiety when patients know they need complex dental work.

"When teeth start breaking down and it's showing visibly, that can really affect the way you live your life, your social life and your confidence," she said. "Sometimes, people are embarrassed. But they shouldn't be. That's why we're here."

Most of all, she stresses to patients that there are options if they don't like how their teeth look or feel.

"Dentistry is not something to be afraid of," she said. "It can change your life."

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