



Dr. Kayla Dawson at Pippin Dental

A Guided Journey

As a young child, Dr. Kayla Dawson loved to play with K'Nex. The plastic construction toys allow users to build just about anything they can imagine. At the time, Dr. Dawson envisioned using her skills as an architectural engineer, but in high school, she met a mentor who changed her perspective entirely.

The woman, an endodontist, helped Dr. Dawson realize that her passion for building and fixing things with her hands would make her a good dentist. It was the first of two key points when her life path veered significantly from what she expected.

"She really took me under her wing and encouraged me to pursue dentistry instead," Dr. Dawson said. "That had never occurred to me. I was able to shadow her, and she became an incredible mentor to me."

A Dream Come True

At age 15, her mentor took her to tour the Indiana University School of Dentistry. Dr. Dawson said she fell in love with both the school and the idea of becoming a dentist. From there, the pieces started coming together.

Dr. Dawson attended Indiana University Bloomington before going on to IU School of Dentistry. While she applied to multiple schools, there never was a question about where she really

wanted to go. She was drawn to Indiana University's strong caries assessment and pediatric dentistry programs.

"I found out I got into IU School of Dentistry and immediately declined all other offers," she said.

A Set Back To An Opportunity

Early in her training, Dr. Dawson arranged to purchase a private practice when she graduated in her hometown of Terre Haute, Indiana. Shortly

before graduation, however, the practice was unexpectedly sold to someone else. *"I was two months to graduation and without a job," Dr. Dawson recalled. "I was terrified out of my mind."*

Once again, fate intervened to set her on a new path. This time, it was a recruiter from Benevis contacting her about an opportunity at a new dental clinic serving children and adults in Terre Haute. Dr. Dawson was drawn to Benevis' mission of improving

access to care, and the strong support network it would provide her as a new dentist.

"It was the perfect fit," she said. "I had some great mentors both operationally and clinically, and that convinced me to stay. Here I am eight years later, still with Benevis. I decided to put private practice on the back burner and continue doing what I love."

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The Community She Loves

Dr. Dawson also is heavily involved in her community. The practice partners with the local Head Start program, YMCA, and park district, among others. She relishes volunteering at park district events and visiting local schools to teach kids about good dental health.

"I love reaching out in the community," she explained. "My husband tells me that my face lights up when I do these events, it is when I really shine."

Was it fate?

Like the rods and connectors of the K'Nex toys she loved in her youth, Dr. Dawson said the unexpected twists and turns of life helped her build a career she loves.

"If I could tell my younger self anything, I would say that this was the right place to be, that the mentors would be there to help me build my skillset and my confidence, and that everything was going to be okay," she said. "I would say, 'You are helping people, this is what you were meant to do.' If there is something called fate, this was definitely fate."

About Pippin

Pippin Dental and Braces is one of Indiana's leaders in Medicaid and affordable dental care for children and their families. Supported by Benevis, Pippin Dental's eight locations serves over 31,000 children on Medicaid annually. Pippin Dental and its doctors are committed to improving lives by providing high-quality dental care in a fun, compassionate environment. To learn more about Pippin Dental, visit PippinDental.com.

About Benevis

Since 2002, Benevis has provided dental practice management services to over 150+ supported offices across 15 states. With a network of 45 different brands, we provide care to more than 620,000 patients each year. Eighty-five percent of those patients are enrolled in state Medicaid programs. Benevis is dedicated to improving lives and communities by providing high-quality dental care in a fun, compassionate environment.



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