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Cosmetic dentist and UCLA alum brings smiles into the spotlight

By Erica Drake



Bill Dorfman, a UCLA alumnus, is a media personality and celebrity cosmetic dentist. He is also involved with LEAP, a nonprofit education foundation that organizes youth leadership programs at UCLA. (Dayoung Lee/Daily Bruin)

Bill Dorfman transformed people’s smiles through dental surgeries when he was featured on the television show “Extreme Makeover.”

“What I realized is, when you save a lot of teeth, you save a smile,” Dorfman said. “And when you save a smile, a lot of times you save a life.”

Dorfman, a UCLA 1980 alumnus and cosmetic dentist, has been featured on television shows like ABC’s “Extreme Makeover” and the daytime talk show “The Doctors.”



Dorfman, who has been featured on television shows like the daytime talk show The Doctors, said being on television motivated him to continue his work in entertainment. (Courtesy of Bill Dorfman)

Cosmetic dentistry focuses on improving the [appearance of people's teeth](#). Dorfman said that cosmetic dentistry is not widely recognized as a professional field of dentistry like orthodontics.

Dorfman said he went through a rigorous testing process to become an accredited fellow of the [American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry](#), which is the greatest achievement the academy offers.

Becoming a dentist was his dream since he broke his baby teeth in an accident when he was little, Dorfman said. He became inspired by the dentist that helped fix his teeth.

"I just became enamored with the profession and how much it helped me and I just thought I want to help other people like this," Dorfman said.

Dorfman said he got into the entertainment industry after promoting [Smiles for Life](#), a children's charity that donates profits from teeth whitening products, using celebrities on TV and other media. Being on TV motivated him to continue being involved in the entertainment industry.

However, Dorfman added he realized he was not trained to appear on television – he was trained to fix teeth. He decided to take classes on hosting, commercials and acting to prepare him for future media opportunities.

"As a result, when ABC started doing ('Extreme Makeover') there weren't a lot of dentists that were as media savvy as I was and also had the accredited skills that I had," Dorfman said. "So it was just a very fortuitous fit."

ABC's "Extreme Makeover" cast Dorfman as the show's featured dentist in 2003. After his appearances on the show, people began recognizing him for his work in cosmetic dentistry, even though he also practices general dentistry.

He said he met famous people he never would have met without being on "Extreme Makeover." For example, being on the show gave him the opportunity to go on MTV's "The Osbournes" and perform surgery on Ozzy Osbourne.

He also attracts many celebrity patients such as Usher and Anne Hathaway, he said.

Dorfman said he thinks being on "Extreme Makeover" changed his career and how dentistry is viewed. He added he thinks people take dentistry more seriously as a medical field now that they see the effect it can have on people's lives.

"At the end of the day when these patients went through these extreme makeovers and they were nipped and tucked and everything else in the world, when you asked them what really made the biggest difference on your life, they always said their smile," Dorfman said.

Dorfman's daughter Georgia Dorfman said her father brought her to a filming of "Extreme Makeover" at Disneyland when she was a child. She realized her father's career was special when they walked through an empty Disneyland, which ABC rented out for the show.

Georgia Dorfman said her father is also consistently family-oriented despite his busy schedule. He was always there for her and her sisters for important events like dance recitals, she said.

She added her father would also involve them in his work by taking them with him to places like South Africa and Mexico for lecture and volunteer purposes.

Michael Harrington, a UCLA 1980 alumnus and longtime friend of Dorfman, said he thinks Dorfman's generosity has not changed since they were roommates in college. When Dorfman was a student, he did charity work for inner cities and handed out over-the-counter medication to students on his floor, Harrington said.

Harrington said Dorfman's dedication to the [LEAP Foundation](#) shows how much giving back means to him. In 2008, Dorfman created the foundation, which is an annual leadership program for alumni scholars held at UCLA.

"He doesn't just write a check," Harrington said. "He gives his time."

Dorfman said he was proud to give back to UCLA and the alumni association through the LEAP Foundation because he received a scholarship from the alumni association.

"I feel very fortunate for...the assistance that I was given by the alumni association because I didn't grow up in a wealthy family and I could've never afforded to go to a university like UCLA," Dorfman said.

Dorfman is also still in the entertainment industry. He was recently cast in a new television show similar to "Shark Tank" called "The Money Pit," he said.

"I have to say overall, I've had one of the most amazing careers a dentist could ever have," Dorfman said.

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