

*"It's about more than just teeth."
... It's about each other,
the patients, and
the community.*

—Olesya Salathe

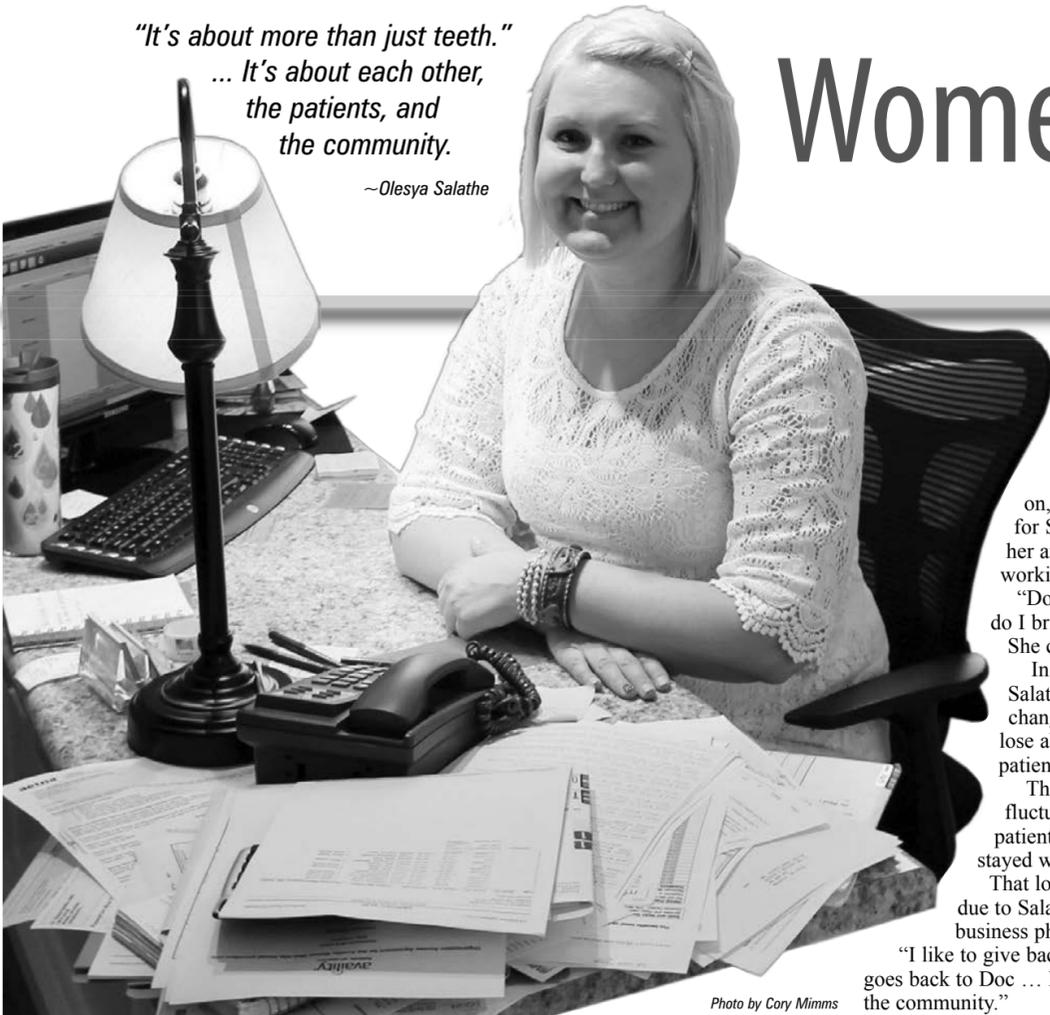


Photo by Cory Mimms

Dr. Olesya Salathe, who runs the Northwest Dental Clinic in Molalla, at her desk.

Women in Business

A special feature of the Molalla Pioneer.

Love for the community at Northwest Dental

Cory Mimms
Molalla Pioneer

Olesya Salathe first started working at Northwest Dental Clinic when she was a student at Molalla High School.

"I started here sterilizing instruments and changing garbage and cleaning toilets," Salathe said. "I really started at the bottom of the totem pole."

Now Salathe owns the clinic. The climb up from the bottom is partially due to a solid education, but there's a bit more to it than that.

Salathe immigrated to the United States from Russia around her eighth birthday.

"In Russia [dentistry] is mainly a female profession," Salathe said. Her parents encouraged her from a young age to consider dentistry as her line of work. Salathe said she remembers being a child and playing dentist with her dolls. By the age of 12 she said she knew she wanted to go to dental school.

In middle school, Salathe's family took up

residence in Molalla. A few years later, she got a job at Northwest Dental with the intention of learning about the profession from Dr. Paul Puffer, who ran the clinic for 49 years.

Salathe said she remembers the first time Puffer, whom she refers to as "Doc," asked her to polish a tooth.

"I remember sitting in the chair and polishing and thinking, 'this is the coolest thing in the world,'" Salathe said.

In 2010, having just finished her doctorate at Oregon Health and Science University School of Dentistry, Salathe returned to Northwest Dental as an associate.

"I feel like it's come full circle. It's what I've always wanted to do."

She partnered with Puffer's son, Steve, whom Salathe attended high school with. She said she always figured Steve would take over his father's practice, and she was happy he asked her to join him there. It made sense, Salathe said, as her parents lived nearby, and she was starting a family of her own.

Less than a year after she joined Steve Puffer in the business, his father died.

"Even though we remodeled some you

could still feel Doc's presence here," Salathe said. "I think for Steve that was just a little too much."

Steve decided to move on, which left a decision for Salathe to make. Both her and Steve were only working part time.

"Do I become full time or do I bring someone else in?" She chose to go full time.

In the dental practice, Salathe said, when the office changes hands you expect to lose about 20 percent of your patients.

Though there were some fluctuations, she said her patients were great and most stayed with the clinic.

That loyalty may be partially due to Salathe's community-driven business philosophy.

"I like to give back," Salathe said. "It goes back to Doc ... He did a lot of stuff in the community."

Salathe was also a recipient of the Ford Family Foundation Scholarship, which she said encourages not just education but also giving back to the community however people are able to.

"We're all different," Salathe said. "Dental practices are all different," but they can all give back.

Salathe does just that. Last February, the Northwest Dental team screened kids from first grade through third grade from local elementary schools for "Dr. Paul Puffer Heart of the Community Day."

They identified more than 70 kids who needed dental work.

Salathe is holding Dr. Paul Puffer Heart of the Community Day again this year but with a few changes. It is now open for adults and kids. Applications for the service are available for pickup at Northwest Dental and need to be submitted by Jan. 30. The exams, cleanings and other work will be done on Feb. 20.

Along with Heart of the Community Day, Salathe gives back to the community in other ways as well. For the last three years, she has made custom mouth guards for high school athletes. Last year, her and her team fit around 75. The mouth guards typically run about \$200, Salathe said. Her cost is lower, as she makes them in her office, but she still donates the guards to the kids who come in.

"It's something that the athletes can have that unifies them," Salathe said. "We do them in their school colors. They can breathe better. They all love it."

Salathe said she would like it if more kids showed up this year.

"I think people think there must be a catch to it," Salathe said. "But really ... it's absolutely free."

While Salathe tries to give back to the community as much as possible, she hasn't

lost sight of the fact that she's running a business.

"I also try to be [run] efficient business, because at the end of the day it is a business too," Salathe said.

To run that business, Salathe relies on her eight employees, some of whom have been working at the clinic for more than 15 years.

"We have a really good team here," Salathe said, adding that she encourages her employees to think of themselves as part of a team, not as employees.

"It's about more than just teeth, though that really matters to me," Salathe said. It's about each other, the patients, and the community, she said.

That ideology shows in the office environment. For instance, several of Salathe's team members have kids in school, so they turned Doc Puffer's old office into a kid friendly zone, Salathe said. The kids come in to work with their moms, board the school bus outside the clinic, and then return to the clinic after school. They play in the kids' room or do their homework until closing time.

"They're so well behaved," Salathe said.

As for the future, Salathe is thinking big. She's currently the vice president of Clackamas County Dental Society, and she intends to run for president next year.

"The first meeting I went to I was the only female," Salathe said. "Dentistry is still mainly a male dominated profession."

But that's changing, she said, adding that many dental schools now have a more even ratio of men and women attending.

Recently, Salathe held the first ever all women's meeting for the Clackamas County Dental Association, she said. "It was really neat."

The point of the meeting was to establish a network of female dentists, she said. "It becomes very isolated after dental school," as everyone goes to separate practices.

"There's still room to pave," Salathe said. "[The dental] profession is changing a lot, with all these health care changes ... I really want to stay on top of all the changes, and be part of the change to keep our profession what it is ... I don't want to be stagnant."

She said she would like to hire an associate someday as well, so that she can spend more time with her family on their farm—buck, Buck, Goose—in Colton and do more advocating in the dental industry.

"We have some local people that are in dental school," she said. "I'm really proud of the youth ... I want to continue what Dr. Puffer did. Just like myself, he hired me, he gave me an opportunity so I could learn the profession."

Many of the other employees started working for Puffer at a young age as well, Salathe said, and he helped them build a career.

There have been a lot of challenging changes in the last couple years. But salathe said she'd do it all again any day. "You learn so much from it."

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The big picture, by the numbers

■ There were 125,941,000 working age women (16 years of age and older) in the U.S. in 2012 – 72,648,000 were in the labor force.

■ Of the close to 126 million women of working age, 98,938,000 were White, 16,400,000 were Black or African American, 6,815,000 were Asian, and 18,324,000 were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

■ Between 2010 and 2020 the number of women in the labor force is expected to increase at a rate of 0.7 percent, compared to 0.6 percent for men.

Information from the latest (2012) Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Current Population Survey

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Mother, artist, and entrepreneur

Cory Mimms
Molalla Pioneer

RoAnna Voytko has big plans. The business-minded 25-year-old mother of three recently leased the Colton Café. She has no intention of making that her only venture, but it seemed like the best place for her to break into the business world.

"I've always wanted to buy this place," she said. "I know Colton. I know the people. I know the clientele. I know my competition. I know everything about the restaurant."

That familiarity has helped her feel more comfortable in starting her life in business. And she seems to have a knack for it.

"Everything's about the customer," she said. "They wanted bigger portions, I gave them bigger portions. They want more hours, I gave them more hours ... Essentially they're my boss."

Voytko brought in healthier eating options as well, and she got feedback on the new dishes from the regulars and made changes accordingly. "I'm also just really driven by quality and portioning," she said. "It's got to be a good plate of food."

To help create those plates, Voytko hired Rachel Hedeon.

Hedeon went to the Western Culinary Institute and worked in Portland for a time, though she said she's "born and raised" in the Colton area. She's now enjoying working closer to her roots.

"[Hedeon] has a great resume," Voytko said, and so Voytko let Hedeon have the reigns in the café's kitchen. "I always tell her, it's her kitchen ... She's my right-hand man."

Voytko is also working on getting a liquor license, as many people have requested she serve beer and wine. However, she doesn't want the café to lose the family dining atmosphere. "I definitely don't want a bar atmosphere whatsoever ... but a lot of people won't come in because they can't have a beer with their steak."

While Voytko is catering to her current customers' needs, she's also trying to boost the café's presence. She advertises online, in Groupon, Restaurants.com, Yelp, and Trip Advisor, and she has bumped up the restaurant's posts on Facebook. Sometimes though, the most affective way to draw in customers is the tried-and-true word of mouth.

A good portion of Voytko's customer base is locals. She's right across the street from the Colton Fire Department and Cotlontel, so she sees many of those people on a regular basis. But people traveling along Highway 211 also stop in quite a bit on their way to Mt. Hood from Salem.

Voytko also cycles local art through the café, some pieces are for sale and others are just displayed. A couple of Voytko's own paintings are on the wall as well (quite impressive), though she said she's more interested in business than art.

Voytko grew up in Cotton, on Wall Street. Her parents still live in the area and have for 25 years. Voytko now resides in the house directly behind the café with her three boys, who are between the ages of 2 and 5 years old.

"They're a handful," she said. "They're really good kids though ... They love the life here. They love knowing that this is a stable place for us. They love coming over here and



Photo by Cory Mimms

RoAnna Voytko recently leased the Colton Café with the option to buy. It's been a lot of work, she said, especially the first month. But now, she's settling in and enjoying herself.

eating pancakes all the time."

Seeing her kids in the café brings back a lot of good memories from Voytko's own childhood.

Voytko is the youngest of six kids. "I grew up really poor," she said. Her dad, now retired from working as a commercial contractor, took her to the café every year on her birthday.

"We'd get a pancake and hot chocolate, and it was the most special thing in the world to me because we never got to go out," she said. "It's the best memory I have of here."

Early on, Voytko's parents and family helped her to see her potential, she said. "My dad always encouraged me to do anything I wanted to."

And what she wanted to do was own the Colton Café. She originally intended to buy the café three years ago. However, things didn't work out.

She ended up moving with her first husband to Colorado, she said. They split up, and she stayed there for two years. While there, she met someone who was just getting out of the army. They moved to Florida together, where Voytko enrolled in an entrepreneurial program at Florida State.

"Business is something I've always been passionate about," she said. Before her

classes began, the man she moved to Florida with died unexpectedly. Voytko was then living in Panama City with her three kids.

"I was sitting around in Florida wondering what to do with my life," she said.

She returned to the idea of purchasing the Colton Café, and this time around everything fell into place.

"Everything just aligned right," she said. "It was perfect in my life as well, because it got me out of a rut ... I feel like I'm in the right place ... I'm in my element now."

She has many ideas for other businesses, she said. She likes crunching number and working on the management end of things.

Voytko is currently leasing the café with the option to buy. "The first month was really hard," she said, adding that the transition was a bit chaotic. "So stressful. So long. I hope I block the first month out of my mind for the rest of my life," she said, laughing. "[But] so far I love it. I really do. I don't have any regrets even on a bad day."

The holiday season was difficult as well, because there was a lull in business. "I knew that was going to be our low point," she said.

Now that the holiday season is over, she said, "business is picking up really good. We're in the clear."

Her second biggest challenge so far has

been balancing the employer/employee relationship. "I like everybody," she said. "I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings."

She keeps the lines of communication open with monthly staff meetings and one-on-one interactions between her and her 13 employees.

Most of the original staff was family with the previous owners, Voytko said, and all but two left when she took over. So one of the first things Voytko had to do was hire a new staff. She doesn't schedule herself on the floor or for cooking, but she can fill in for any of her employees in a pinch, she said.

"It's frustrating sometimes, and it's a lot of work and a lot of hours, but I'm the kind of person that's not afraid to work hard," she said. "I do better when I have a lot on my plate."

This is her biggest business venture yet, though she said it's not her last. "I have a lot of ambition." She would like to buy the market in Colton, but said the owners aren't interested in selling it. She's also interested in real estate investment. She would like to stay in the Colton area, at least initially. "I'm here now, and I really like it."

Within three to five years, she said she'd like to purchase the café, rather than continue leasing it. "I'll have a better handle on everything [by then]," she said. But she would still like to expand beyond the café after that. "I have ideas brewing."

"I don't have any regrets, even on a bad day."

~RoAnna Voytko

The big picture, by the numbers

■ Women's participation in the labor force accounted for 57.7 percentage of the working age women population in 2012, compared to 70.2 percentage participation rate for men.

■ By 2020, the labor force participation rate of women is projected to be 57 percentage, compared to 68 percentage for men.

■ The labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 years of age was 70.5 percentage in 2012, 75.1 percentage for mothers with children 6-17 years of age, and 64.8 percentage for mothers with children under 6 years of age, 61.4 percentage for mothers with children under 3 years of age, and 57 percentage for mother of infants (2012 annual averages).

Information from the latest (2012) Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Current Population Survey

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