

# Cosmetic Improvements

A dentist to the stars, the Bruins, and local families

BY JENNIFER BRUNI

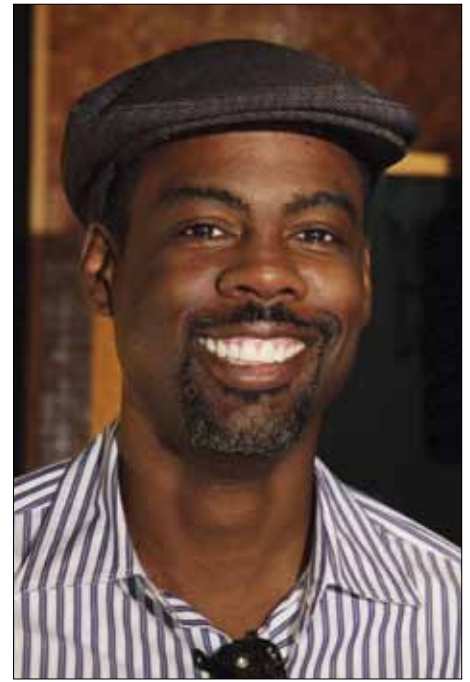
**T**ELEVISION AND MOVIE STARS DAZZLE US with their glamorous looks. Of course these stars have an entourage of make-up artists, hair stylists, and clothing stylists following them wherever they go, but they wouldn't look as great as they do without their bright, pearly white smiles.

Thomas Connelly has improved the smiles of dozens of famous mouths and achieved a career as one of the most successful—and youngest—pioneers in cosmetic dentistry. But it didn't happen without a lot of hard work.

Connelly is the first dentist in his family, and says he chose dentistry because he really liked his orthodontist growing up in Troy, Michigan, a suburb just outside of Detroit. He graduated from an accelerated program in college at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry, earning his doctorate in dental surgery two years ahead of schedule, at the age of 23.

After graduating from dental school in 1997, Connelly worked in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for three years as an associate in the busy cosmetic dental practice of Dr. Mike Crete. While he learned much from that association right out of college, Connelly recalls that there were few opportunities in Michigan and the Midwest at the time. "New England, with all of its hospitals and universities, not to mention the ocean, the mountains—all the beauty we have here—the entire quality of life really appealed to me," says Connelly. "It seemed like an obvious choice to come and set up a business and a life here."





Dr. Connelly has worked on dozens of famous mouths, including hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, supermodel Heidi Klum and comedian Chris Rock.

**Boston-bound**

The search for more opportunities led Connelly to the Boston area in 2000, settling in Bolton, Massachusetts. Over the course of four years after taking the leap to Massachusetts, Connelly founded The Connelly Group, a network of four private practices in Bolton, Boston, and Concord, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island. In addition to teaching at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine each week, in his “spare time” Connelly also founded a ceramics laboratory with partner Yasu Kawabe, and created Oral Design Boston, located in the heart of the Back Bay.

Connelly’s ambitious attitude led him to New York City, where he began working on some of the most famous mouths in show business. He called and introduced himself to doctors Mark Lowenberg and Gregg Lituchy, two of the top cosmetic dentists in the world. “I had done some major patient reconstruction cases that I thought they’d find interesting,” Connelly recalls. “So I called them to tell about the work I did and in the process I basically talked to them into meeting with me,” he laughs.

Lowenburg and Lituchy bonded with Connelly instantly, and together, the group worked on dozens of famous mouths, including supermodels Heidi Klum and cell phone-wielding diva Naomi Campbell, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, comedian Chris Rock, and actors Julianna Margulies and Amanda Peet, among others. The New York City practice often garners nationwide media exposure, and is featured on popular TV shows and in

print, including *People* magazine, the *Extreme Makeover* show, *Oprah*, *The Today Show*, *The View*, and ABC News.

Not surprisingly, the fast pace and constant demands took a heavy physical toll on Connelly. “It was such an exciting time. It was a period of tremendous growth and achievement for me,” Connelly remembers. “I worked on politicians, athletes, celebrities, but I found myself working 10 hours a day and then when I went home, I was still “on.” It was like I couldn’t stop thinking about work.”

**From celebrities to families**

Connelly did a serious re-evaluation of his goals and realized that he couldn’t maintain such a grueling, inhuman pace. In 2007, in search of a more peaceful, balanced lifestyle for himself and his new family, he decided to relocate again, choosing Manchester, where he started Connelly Dentistry. With the love of his life, his wife Michelle, a stay-at-home mother, the couple share a busy household with six children. Connelly now has more time to help with the kids with his less- hectic schedule, and Connelly says, “I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Connelly desired a small city with elements of a big-city atmosphere. “Manchester is really a nice New England town with a cool historical area,” he says. “The whole Manhattan and Back Bay thing for me is over now. I really appreciate Manchester. The big cities are too fast-paced and not conducive to family life.”



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Local dentist Thomas Connelly poses with his patients, Bruins Captain Zdeno Chara (left) and stand-out rookie Blake Wheeler (right).

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Connelly's new practice does full-mouth reconstruction, including full smile makeovers, or full-mouth veneers. "One of the things that enabled me to open such an advanced dental practice in Manchester was my relationship in New York with Jason Kim, an extraordinarily talented ceramist, who I call the 'Picasso of teeth,'" Connelly says. "Name any celebrity in the United States and chances are Jason has done their veneers. Jason only works with a handful of dentists and I was extremely lucky to get in through the door to work with him, thanks to my partners in New York."

And thanks to Thomas Connelly's talent and hard work, Manchester now has access to world-class dentistry. "I've have been working with Jason Kim on a regular basis since 2000. You cannot do these complex cases without the right ceramists, and these artists are now finally available in the New Hampshire area," he says.

### Smile!

So far, cosmetic dentistry seems immune from the strains affecting the economy as a whole. Dr. Connelly attributes the growth in cosmetic dentistry, which is not covered by insurance, to the fact that people often scrimp and save for years to improve their teeth. Many of Connelly's clients tell him they've wanted to change their smile since they were very young.

"First impressions are critical, and you only have a few seconds to make a favorable one. Everybody notices your smile," says Connelly. "Cosmetic dentistry does change people permanently and dramatically, in a profoundly good way. Some people have kept from smiling their whole lives, because they feel so self-conscious about the way they look."

After having a cosmetic procedure, Connelly says that many of his clients become more outgoing. They are often perceived as happier because they smile more frequently, because they no longer want to hide their teeth.

The focus of Connelly Dentistry isn't entirely about the cosmetics, however. He's able to treat everybody in the family. "I really enjoy being able to take a more general approach to treating all aspects of family dental care," Connelly says. He also provides free dental care for two Manchester area homeless shelters: the Liberty House, which cares for veterans, and Angie's Shelter for Women, a refuge for women and children. "We try to do our part to help cover those people who are really in need and have no options to otherwise get access to quality dental care," Connelly explains.

Dr. Connelly's future plans include moving Connelly Dentistry to become a part of the medical suites adjacent to the new Elliot Hospital River's Edge development, in downtown Manchester along the Merrimack River. 