Bend Up Close: Dr. Michael Tobey

by K_Guice

Itâ€™s rare to find a teenager that truly has a grasp of what they want to be when they grow up. Many talk of wanting to be a rock star or actor, but not Michael Tobey. He always knew he was destined to be a chiropractor.

Dr. Michael Tobey says of his profession, "I like serving people. I think it's the greatest joy." As a young teen, he used to get headaches and nose bleeds. His mother, who had been seeing a chiropractor for bursitis, took him in to be adjusted after being educated about the impact it could have on a personâ€™s health.

After being adjusted, he was happy to report the headaches and nosebleeds went away. â€œThe spine is protecting your nervous system,â€• Dr. Tobey said. â€œThatâ€™s why chiropractors can help with far more than just back pain.â€•

After visiting the family chiropractor, Dr. Steve Deshaw, his mother joked that he should own a practice of his own one day. â€œShe told me, â€˜You should become a chiropractor so I can get free care the rest of my life,â€™â€• he laughed.

Little did his mother know, her words had sealed his fate. â€œI made the conscience decision when I was 14,â€• he said. â€œWhen I went to high school I took my anatomy and physiology courses in preparation. In college, I went to become a chiropractor.â€•

Dr. Tobey graduated from Western States Chiropractic College in Portland and started practicing in Bend in 1991.

Today, he specializes in correcting poor posture across Bend. He believes it is the root of many of our

health problems.

â€œNot only does poor posture make us look bad, it is responsible for our body wearing out sooner than it should,â€• Dr. Tobey said.

He says if you think about it, everyoneâ€™s bodies are fighting gravity 24 hours a day. â€œAs we age it starts wearing us down and wearing our joints down,â€• he said.

How well a person takes care of themselves now indicates how they will age in their 30s, 40s and 50s. â€œI talk to kids in school and I will talk to them as young as age five about sitting up straight,â€• he said.

Based on a personâ€™s poor posture, Dr. Tobey can predict what issues a person will have. Depending on how they are sitting he can typically tell if they are having shoulder pain, lower back problems or headaches.

â€œAll day long I speak with patients about the wear and tear on their spine,â€• he said. â€œWe teach people how to take care of themselves and adjust them.â€•

Part of caring for oneself is learning proper spinal hygiene. Many of the fundamentals for a healthy spine are part of living a healthy life.

â€œStay hydrated,â€• Dr. Tobey advised. â€œWater is super, super important.â€•

While youâ€™re having that extra big glass of water, think about what you should eat with it. â€œWe need to eat a lot more fresh fruits and vegetables,â€• Dr. Tobey said. â€œWe eat too many processed things from a can or a box. Itâ€™s not good for you.â€•

He says, when shopping stick to the meat and fresh food sections. How a person eats not only impacts your overall health but can make a big difference to your spine.

Equally as important is exercise. â€œWe are meant to move and use our muscles and literally we kill ourselves by not moving enough,â€• Dr. Tobey warned.

However, when he speaks of exercise, the doctor isnâ€™t saying that someone has to go into weight training. Movement is the big thing and doing it daily.

â€œYou brush your teeth everyday, you need to stretch and strengthen your spine every day,â€• he said.

Talking to Dr. Tobey, it is clear to see he has a passion about his job and a soft spot for his patients. â€œI like serving people,â€• he said. â€œI think itâ€™s the greatest joy.â€•

While he feels he has always been service oriented, he admits seeing the skeptics can be especially rewarding.

â€œIts pretty cool when you have someone come in who is very skeptical who has had headaches for years and after a couple of adjustments they feel better,â€• he said.

Many donâ€™t understand how the body is connected. For example, there are trigger points that Dr. Tobey says he can use to help alleviate peopleâ€™s sinus issues.

â€œThe problem is, today we are bombarded with the idea of fast-acting relief,â€• he said. â€œWe are a get quick-fix society. We donâ€™t want to change our lifestyle; we just want to take a pill.â€•

While that works short term, Dr. Tobey says everyone should ask themselves about the long-term consequences.

â€œWe are not getting healthier, we are probably getting sicker,â€• he warned. â€œOur alternative is to choose a healthy lifestyle.â€•

He says if he can help people make the right choices along the way, then he has done his job.

Based on how busy business is, he must be doing it well. From the deep, decadent massage chairs to the latest treatment and equipment, people not only come back for more, they tell friends and family they should pay a visit too.

â€œMy whole practice, since Iâ€™ve been here, has all been by referral,â€• he said proudly. â€œItâ€™s the best thank you someone can give me, whether they refer a co-worker or spouse.â€•

When Dr. Tobey isnâ€™t working he is spending time with his family. He has been married for 18 years to Carol, who he calls the backbone of the family.

The two met in 1988 in Portland. She had three small children and they had two more. Thatâ€™s a grand total of five kids.

Their eldest is Ken, 23. â€œHe is living here in the Bend and works with us in a side business,â€• Dr. Tobey said.

Then there is 22-year-old Brieana who just graduated from the University of Oregon. She is now living in Spain where she teaches English. â€œWeâ€™re proud of her,â€• he said. â€œShe is great, plus we get to go visit her in the spring,â€• he laughed.

â€œDenae is 20. She is in Costa Mesa where she is going to school to become an aesthetician,â€• he said proudly.

Then there is Michaela. She is a 15-year-old sophomore at Summit High School. â€œShe is really funny,â€• he laughed as he thought of a story. â€œShe wanted to be a dentist, chiropractor and a veterinarian. She was going to call it Crack a Smile.â€• Today, her gaze has turned to soccer and has been kicking around the idea of perusing it as a career.

Kirsten, 14, is a freshman at Summit. â€œShe loves writing and is the baby of the family,â€• he said. â€œShe is cool. They are all cool.â€•

If Dr. Tobey isnâ€™t at work or out and about with the family, you will find him on the golf course. â€œI

have the golf bug,â€• he admits. â€œI play two or three times a week, whenever I can.â€•

Reluctantly, he revealed that his handicap is 13. â€œIâ€™m a terrible golfer,â€• he laughed. However, he says itâ€™s fun and getting out and moving is a big part of the healthy lifestyle that he encourages everyone to achieve.

When asked for one word of wisdom, Dr. Tobey offered only one line that he hoped everyone would grab onto and truly hear, â€œTake care of your spine it has to last you your whole life.â€•

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