

Change on the outside helps woman be her true self

Jodie Byrne works as a waitress at a Bob Evans restaurant on the Eastside of Indianapolis. Recently, she received a \$20 tip from a customer who had a cup of coffee. Maybe the service really was that good. Or maybe the customers are seeing a different person.



Brett Halbleib

When people ask her why she's so happy, she tells them the truth: She had a makeover. A complete makeover. Teeth, eyes, ears, nose, even a new haircut — "I got a whole new head, basically."

It has changed her life. She's confident, more self-assured. Friends invite her out. Men notice her. She isn't afraid to meet people. Oh, and she's getting better tips.

"My confidence in everything is boosted up," Byrne said. "I smile all the time now; it made me a happier person. My outlook on life is better."

The best part? It was free.

The makeover was the brainchild of Dr. Gregory B. Raymond, who has been practicing in Franklin for 27 years. He does a lot of work in cosmetic and restorative dentistry.

Raymond, 53, got the idea from the TV show "Extreme Makeover." He said it occurred to him that he and other area doctors had the same training as those on the program, "so why not do something locally to someone deserving of a makeover?"

At first he was thinking about a smile makeover, but then he decided to see how far he could take the idea.

He took it pretty far. He recruited Drs. Linda Frechette and Michael J. Pankraztz to work on Byrne's eyes, and Dr. Mark Hamilton to work on her ears and nose.

Applicants had been asked to explain why they thought they needed or deserved a makeover. Byrne's application stood out.

She wrote, "I really don't like smiling because I feel everyone is looking at my teeth. ... A lot of people made fun of me in school because I was toothless."

When she was 11, she fell while ice skating and lost three front teeth. Beyond that, one of her ears was misshapen from birth, and "I had big, old goofy glasses."

Byrne endured more than her share of harassment while growing up. Classmates called her "toothless" or "horse teeth," that kind of thing. "I lost a lot of friends because of that," she said. "I was like, 'Grow up,' but many never grew up about it."

She stopped socializing. She started getting into fights. During her junior year, she dropped out of school.

When she turned 17, she moved to Aiken, S.C., and lived with her older sister, Kelly Higginbottom.

"I wasn't really happy here. I figured I'd get a new start out there," Byrne said. But about a year ago, she moved back to the Eastside to care for her ailing



Jodie Byrne (seen before and after her makeover) had endured teasing over her appearance for years. After donating work by four doctors, she says, "I like the change."



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■ Doctors donated about \$30,000 worth of services.

From \$1

mother, who eventually spotted the ad for the makeover.

Byrne had "kind of given up on her life," Raymond said.

The surgeries were performed in stages, and the work was finished in early July.

Raymond estimates Byrne received about \$30,000 worth of services, nearly half of them from him. He performed bridge work, gum work and whitening, and added crowns on the back teeth.

"She had a lot going on," Raymond said.

He acknowledges that it's not the kind of thing doctors can do every day.

"You can't go around giving services away." But it was fairly easy to get the other doctors on board — they know what a life-changing effect such procedures can have.

"It's not just a physical transformation. It's a psychological transformation, too," Raymond said.



Dr. Gregory B. Raymond got the idea to offer a makeover to someone local after seeing a show on television.

He is eager to continue the makeovers and is soliciting applicants for the next one.

Raymond is looking for someone who is self-conscious about appearance, who thinks surgery could improve his or her life and who doesn't have the means to pursue cosmetic surgery.

He hopes to complete the second makeover before the holidays. Interested people can call his office at (317) 738-3111 for an application.

Byrne said she never had any second thoughts. "The only way I had to go was up."

She's back in school and she has a boyfriend. She's thinking of pursuing art or photography.

While Raymond was inspired by the TV show, he's not a big fan of the genre.

"It's a little much," he said. Cosmetic surgery is not a competition. It's about "being able to make a difference in someone's life."

Byrne said a few of her friends told her things like, "I'd never do that, change the body God gave me." But Byrne says, "I'd suggest it to anybody." Other people can't understand what it's like unless they go through it.

"I like the change."

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