



Dream

MAKEOVER

Meredith Sickmeier's wish came true in a big way

In the late 1960s, Cass Elliot, as part of The Mamas & The Papas, told us to "Dream A Little Dream of Me." For many of those in the baby boom generation, that song became a memory, a mantra, a lullaby or a wish.

Baby boomer Meredith Sickmeier dreamed a dream for herself — and this year it came true. She is the 2006 winner of the *Indianapolis Woman Dream Makeover*.

Sickmeier grew up on the east side of Indianapolis. Her parents, Tom and Marjorie Keyt, recently celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary. She describes her childhood as typical and her parents as inspirational.

"My mother stayed at home until I went off to college," Sickmeier says. Then she got a job at the Fort Benjamin Harrison Finance Center and worked her way up the ladder

By Sheri Riley Roman Photos by Lesle Tomlin

Photographed on location at the Conrad Indianapolis



until her retirement. "She had gone from high school to being a married woman," Sickmeier says, "yet she honed her skills and kept advancing with new positions. That's just the way both of my parents have always been. They give 110 percent," she says.

Of her father, Sickmeier says, "He was always taking care of us."

Sickmeier also has a sister four years her junior, and while sibling rivalry was in residence in their youth, today she considers her sister one of her best friends.

In 1976, fate intervened in Sickmeier's life in a movie theater. She took a part-time job selling tickets and met a young man who worked as a ticket taker.

"There's a lot of down time between shows, so we had plenty of time to get acquainted," she recalls.

She and Jeffrey Sickmeier married in 1978 and today have three grown children: Erin Arkins, 24; Rachel Sickmeier, 22; and Andrew Sickmeier, 20. They have all been very encouraging and supportive during the competition and makeover process, Sickmeier says.

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"I try not to give my children advice about marriage or relationships," she says, "but I guess I have stressed the importance of someone with whom you can share laughs and common interests.

"The flip side of that is also the willingness to let them go off and do something that you have no interest in," Sickmeier adds.

Sickmeier says she entered the Dream Makeover competition because she was compelled by the photos of previous winners. "I carried the information about the contest around for a couple of weeks," she says. "I kept telling myself that I wouldn't win. Why bother? My daughters were the ones who said, 'Go for it!' My husband also reinforced my belief that it's a chance for a lifetime."

Jeffrey, her husband, says, "I've known for a long time that Meredith would like to have pretty teeth and a younger face. Since she won the Dream Makeover, I have been in a state of wonder at this amazing opportunity."

Ultimately, it was the prospect of a new smile that moved Sickmeier off the fence. She says she has always been self-conscious about her smile. As a teenager, she experienced the brutal honesty of a friend's child who asked about her "pointy" teeth.

Every entrant in the Dream Makeover contest had to submit an essay. In hers, Sickmeier wrote, "I cannot remember a time in my life when I looked at a picture of myself and didn't hate my teeth. I would love to have a smile I could be proud of."

Sickmeier has been a special education teacher in the Indianapolis Public School system for 28 years. She says she tries to smile at every student every day. Many of her students come from less-than-ideal home situations and she believes a smile and a kind word have a positive impact on their experiences. "The best part about teaching is that the kids keep you young; every day is a new opportunity," she says. "You can't get bored. You can't get in a rut."

In addition to teaching at Margaret McFarland Middle School,

Sickmeier's responsibilities have expanded to compliance monitoring for the special education laws related to testing and documentation.

Once she was announced as the 2006 winner, Sickmeier was asked by some of her students if she was going to be the next "Swan," in reference to the television show. Although her response was "no," she now says she understands how some of those participants might feel.

The entire Dream Makeover package and process has been overwhelming in a positive way, she says. The buzz of activity, the generous gifts and her personal transformation has been the primary item on her agenda for several months.

Now that she's settling into her new smile, a more youthful face, some kicky new clothes, and refreshed hair and makeup, she's ready to face the world with her new and improved looks.

"I'm thrilled with my new self," she says. "But I must admit that one of the nicest compliments I've received lately was from

shows and thanks to the Dream Makeover, she says, "I might be able to play some of the younger parts."

Sickmeier compares the makeover to her renewed passion for theater: "You get to dress up, put on makeup and portray a different role ... what could be better?"

A Team Effort

The professionals behind our Dream Team

Last December, a caring group of professionals came together to form *Indianapolis Woman's Dream Team* for the 2006 Dream Makeover. The team's mission was to offer one lucky reader the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience a physical and emotional transformation. Members of this elite team graciously agreed to provide their services free of charge to the winner.

The magazine received nearly 1,000 entries. Contestants were judged through a series of steps and whittled down over a period of months to 25 semifinalists, who were

undergo the various procedures. Norrisa N. Johnson, M.D. says her participation in the Dream Makeover is a wonderful opportunity to educate women on opportunities to embrace life and make necessary changes. Her practice focuses on internal medicine and offers laser services for acne, rosacea and spider veins.

The Dream Makeover winner is thrust into a whirlwind of activity immediately after the announcement. Sickmeier says she didn't even have time to get nervous about her procedures. She was announced as the winner at the end of April and surgery was performed May 10. Actually, her husband is the one who had the case of nerves, she says. An engineer for Rolls Royce, Jeffrey Sickmeier was a little skittish about his post-operative duties. With a chuckle, she says he did just fine.

Sickmeier's transformation was revealed to all at a private party at *Cibo Ristorante Italiano* on Aug. 31. Members of the Dream Team were in attendance to cheer her on.



my 84-year-old father, who is not what you would describe as demonstrative, and he told me that he thought I was beautiful before any of this was done."

In high school, Sickmeier picked up the acting bug and performed in several shows. Family dedication and career obligations sidelined that passion for a while but when she turned 50, she said, "Why not?" and auditioned for a part in a Footlite Community theater production. "I got a part in the chorus in the very first show I auditioned for," she says. Since then, she's done a number of shows and most recently portrayed Betty Black in *Footloose* — on roller skates. She's considering other community

invited to a daylong session to meet most of the members of the Dream Team. From that meeting came the finalists.

At the finalists' luncheon on April 22, each woman made a two-minute presentation to the *Indianapolis Woman* panel of celebrity judges: Joy Dumandan of WISH-TV 8, Stacia Matthews from WRTV 6, Anne Marie Tiernon of WTHR 13 and Helen Wells from The Helen Wells Agency. The judges heard each heartfelt story and their reasons for wanting a makeover. They chose Meredith Sickmeier.

The Adult Medicine & Laser Skin Care Center gave Sickmeier a pre-surgery examination to ensure her health was good to

Cosmetic surgery

Sickmeier's cosmetic surgery was performed by Dr. Mark Hamilton, FACS, and his team at Hamilton Facial Plastic Surgery. At her one-month, post-surgery follow-up visit, Sickmeier was amazed at the difference.

"I looked at the pictures he had taken prior to surgery and couldn't believe that I hadn't noticed the sagging under my chin or the way my eyelids were so buggy," she says. Her surgery included an eyelift, a chin tuck and complete facelift. In addition to surgery, Hamilton used Botox and Restylane treatments for filling fine lines and general softening of her overall look.

As Sickmeier explains, "I said Dr.

Hamilton that my face is his canvas — do whatever you need to do to make it your masterpiece.”

“Meredith is a dream patient,” Hamilton says. “Her recovery is right on schedule.” He is quick to credit many others on the team, including St. Francis Hospital for providing the pre-operative, postoperative and surgical care at no cost. Natalie Russell covered the nursing care and Robert Stump, M.D. also provided anesthetic services for the surgery.

“Like you would expect from a teacher, she has followed the instructions to every detail,” Hamilton says.

Dentistry

Ironically, the changes Sickmeier most desired required the greatest courage.



Although a new smile was a motivator for her participation, she admits to a fear of dentistry.

Gregory B. Raymond, DDS, FAGD has dealt with dental-phobic patients throughout his years in practice and regularly

concern for Sickmeier. Another component in her prize package is a consultation with Health and Nutrition Technology. Her goal is to lose 40 to 50 pounds and do it in a healthy way.

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encounters patients who have endured unpleasant dental experiences in their early years. “Especially with baby boomers, it’s not uncommon for their fear to stem from something that happened in childhood,” he says. “Many of them who avoid the dentist don’t realize how much dentistry has changed over the years.”

Raymond’s practice, The Center for Cosmetic & Family Dentistry, is experiencing an influx of this generation who want to improve their smile and overall dental health. “I recently heard a great quote,” he says. “Baby Boomers want to die young at a very old age.”

At 56, Sickmeier is a member of this generation and fits the profile of many of her peers.

Raymond used sedation dentistry, which allowed her to sleep through the entire procedure.

Sickmeier remembers it a little differently. “I may have done some silly things,” she laughs. “Although I have no memory of the procedures, I do know at one point I was singing while he was trying to put the earphones on me.”

Raymond completed 20 porcelain restorations (10 upper teeth and 10 lower teeth) with a combination of porcelain veneers and crowns. The entire process was completed in three appointments over the course of six weeks. Although her teeth never kept her from smiling before, Sickmeier says, now she smiles with more confidence.

Nutrition

Like most of us in middle age, weight is a

Sheila Henson, registered dietitian and program director, says their focus is much bigger. “We chose to participate in the Dream Makeover because we change lives every day.”

The entire staff is composed of professionals, including physicians — three endocrinologists, dietitians, nurses, exercise specialists and a health education specialist. They encourage participants to take a long-term view of health and well-being, rather than just a number on the scale.

Wardrobe

What woman doesn’t wish for a few new items for her wardrobe? Sickmeier was treated to three new outfits with accessories, courtesy of The Secret Ingredient. Jeanne Rush, owner, and Susi Eckert, manager of the Indianapolis store, assisted Sickmeier in her clothing selections.

“She was so excited,” Rush says. “The first thing she told us was she wanted to get out of the teacher look, like jumpers with extra pockets, and experiment with clothing she wouldn’t ordinarily wear.”

Rush says Sickmeier’s enthusiasm was infectious. Throughout her consultation, Sickmeier wasn’t afraid to try new accessories or colors she would have usually steered away from.

The Secret Ingredient is also willing to work with items already in a customer’s wardrobe, regardless of where they were purchased. “There are a lot of stores that focus exclusively on the young,” Rush says. “Other customers still want to look young and fun. We love working with those customers.”

Throughout her 27 years in business, Rush has noticed that women over age 40 sometimes tend to slip into the habit of elasticized waistbands or bulky sweaters with the intention of hiding figure flaws. “It’s just too sad

Dr. Mark Hamilton plans Sickmeier’s eye-lift among other facial procedures (top). Dr. Gregory B. Raymond and his assistant work on Sickmeier’s new smile (left).