

What a Smile Means to Me

By Sierra Lathlin

Growing up with crooked teeth was one of the toughest things I have had to do. But unfortunately there was nothing I could have done to make them magically get straighter myself. At the time, I did not think elementary would make such an impact on who I am today, but it has. I would be picked on by immature elementary peers and was called certain names based on my appearance. At the time, I did not have the slightest clue those names I was being called and the things my classmates were saying about my appearance would carry on with me till this present day.

From way back when I could remember, I have always worried about my appearance and what other people thought about me. I then started wearing makeup at a young age, because my parents could not afford plastic surgery or a type of treatment to make my appearance more attractive to look at, so I truly believed makeup was my last resort to ever becoming the beautiful young girl I always imagined myself to be.

My family could not afford to pay for my orthodontic care, after paying for my older sister Tasha's braces a couple months prior. But my goal to be beautiful didn't stop there; I wanted my crooked teeth to become perfect just like the celebrities. Luckily enough, I was sponsored to get braces by Status instead. Even throughout the years I spent with braces on my teeth, I still continued to hide my smile and covered my mouth with my hand while I talked so nobody would notice my teeth. It was the biggest factor which my self-esteem was based around.

About 4 years ago I was lucky enough to have my braces taken off and I have never been happier and more excited to show my pearly whites off. I have been hiding my smile all my preteens because I have had severe crooked teeth and self-esteem issues based around that. I was glad I did not have to hide my smile any longer. Without braces, and Dr. Dumore's team, I would never be as confident and genuinely happy about my appearance as I am today. My smile means everything to me.

A smile means everything to me, as cheesy as that may sound. Many people know that having an attractive smile increases your self-confidence, no matter if you may be 13 or in your late thirties. Smiling not only makes people happy and puts them in a good mood, but by smiling often studies have shown that you could even live longer. The more you smile, the more others find you attractive, relaxed and sincere. I came across a study published in the *Neuropsychologist* journal that seeing an attractive smiling face activates the region in your brain that process sensory rewards. So when you see a person smiling, you actually do feel

rewarded. Smiling is contagious and you could quickly catch it like the flu, so why wouldn't a smile mean EVERYTHING to me.