

## DR. DENNIS WELLS

Dentist and Founder, the Dustin J. Wells Foundation

**W**hen Dr. Dennis Wells lost his oldest son, a music major at Belmont University, he was heartbroken. He knew he had to do something to honor Dustin's memory and celebrate both his young life and love of music.

"The lyrics 'I get by with a little help from my friends' come to mind when I think back to the beginning of the Dustin J. Wells Foundation," Wells tells us. "Losing my oldest son was utterly devastating, and for the longest time, I struggled to just exist. However, some of my close friends were diligently searching for ways to help me cope with my loss, and generous people responded with acts of kindness, including over \$50,000 in donations toward a fund set up in Dustin's memory. I knew I had a responsibility to honor Dustin and to use those funds in a positive way. Through a national dental organization, the Crown Council, directed by Greg and Steve Anderson, the idea came to have a benefit concert and donate the proceeds to the W.O. Smith School of Music. The Crown Council's annual meeting fell in Nashville within a year of Dustin's death. Calling on some of our dear friends and patients to perform, the Crown Council filled the Wildhorse saloon for an emotional night of music and celebration and the Gift of Music event was born."

The result has been extraordinary, a partnership between the Foundation and the W.O. Smith School of Music. The school provides opportunity for the city's children to study music, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Dr. Wells says his son loved kids and truly enjoyed his time as a counsellor at his church camp, and would have loved the connection with W.O. Smith.

Wells still maintains an active role in the organization, providing vision for the Foundation and for the now-annual Gift of Music Concert, which has featured a host of major stars over the past few years. Now, he's looking at ways they can take the model of the Gift of Music and share it with other communities through the Crown Council—a nationwide organization of distinguished dentists.

"We're always exploring ways to make the Gift of Music a more magical night, as well as how we can generate more revenue for the school," says Wells. "In 2013 we'll have the show at the Ryman Auditorium for the first time and will once again have the Crown Council attending. We're also exploring using it as a template for other cities and spreading this template through the Crown Council. In fact, some of the students from the school will be performing in January 2012 for the Crown Council in Vegas with hopes that it will inspire other dentists to bring this concept to their respective cities."

In addition to his amazing work with the Dustin J. Wells Foundation, being a dentist, Dr. Wells is also closely involved with the Interfaith Dental Clinic, Give Back a Smile and Smiles for Life.

Though he does so much in memory of his oldest son, he's also very proud of his two younger sons, Landon (8) and Luke (7). Family is vital to him, and he and his wife Doris enjoy their life in Nashville. With two sons yet to raise, you can also find Dr. Wells giving back by coaching his sons and other kids at various sports. "Our family spends a lot of time on the ball fields," he says.

He also wants us to know the unsung heroes of the Gift of Music Committee: "The Gift of Music Committee consists of: Tony Conway, Ed Hardy, Deb Ham, Rondal Richardson, Ronna Rubin and Jonah Rabinowitz (director of the W.O. Smith School of Music). The foundation and benefit concert has moved far beyond me, and I am so pleased to see it have a life of its own. I know Dustin would be pleased to see the good that is coming from his life, and I am simply grateful for the love that surrounds me and my family."