

ALL SMILES NOW
- Once a high school dropout, Ali Behmard went on to earn his Grade 12 diploma through Capilano College, where he realized there were more options for him than becoming an auto mechanic. Two years ago, he opened his own dental practice in Park Royal Mall.

Daniel Pi photo



From dropout to dentist

Returning to school for his high school diploma didn't just give Ali Behmard his Dogwood, it opened new career doors.

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STAFF REPORTER

Ali Behmard admits he was no angel growing up on the North Shore. In fact, he'll even go as far as admitting he was a troublemaker, attending three different high schools before eventually dropping out after Grade 10. But teeth-knocking, jaw-breaking bad? "No, I wasn't that bad," the 34-year-old West Vancouver dentist answers, laughing at the idea of a former brawler finding redemption fixing people's broken smiles. Life wasn't that rough on the North Shore for Behmard, but hanging around the wrong crowd did mean making some bad decisions before realizing his goal of opening the Park Royal Village Dental Centre two years ago. He bounced from Carson Graham to Balmoral to Sutherland secondaries, got poor marks in classes and eventually dropped out of school altogether. "I guess the simple way to say it was I didn't see the need for an education," Behmard recalls. "And I didn't think I was capable of going very far in school." Life would eventually prove Behmard wrong on both counts. Once out of the classroom, the 16-year-old Behmard headed south to Reno, Nevada where he started working as an auto mechanic in his brother's shop.

Just because he had dropped out, Behmard still wanted to go places and he thought work was the best means to accomplish his goals. "I thought why not make money right away? I wasn't thinking of the value of an education." Behmard was a quick study and worked his way up in the shop, eventually becoming the manager at 17 – something he's still proud of today. But even though he found success in the working world, there was something always nagging him while fixing cars for doctors and CEOs, some of them not that old. "I thought it was kind of embarrassing not to have my (high school) diploma," Behmard says. Behmard returned to the North Shore and entered the Capilano College Adult Education Program with the goal of obtaining a high school diploma and then opening his own car repair shop. Back in the classroom and far away from bad influences and the high school culture of cliques and peer pressure, Behmard started taking to the books. "I found school came very easily for me," he says. "And I started liking it." In that environment and with the right instructors, Behmard started seeing more options. That's when Behmard started considering medicine to help people – instead of cars – come back to life. "I knew I wanted to work in the medical field

and I wanted to work with my hands." Although he enjoyed school, Behmard wasn't ready to commit too many more years to studying. He wanted to start a family as well as become a doctor, so he chose dental school, receiving his dental degree from UBC in 2001. He's now expecting his first child with wife Maryam Zeineddin, a West Vancouver family physician, later this month. Looking back, Behmard never thought the former 17-year-old auto shop manager would ever reach the heights he has. He just wanted to own his own shop when he returned to school for his diploma, and in a way, he has. Except instead of working with mufflers, catalytic converters or hub caps, he's got X-rays, drills and syringes. He opened his own unique dental practice at Park Royal Village two years ago, recently celebrating his two-year anniversary with friends and clients. Park Royal Village Dental Centre is dentistry without the sound of drills (that's covered by headphones connected to TVs installed in the ceiling), without the smells (there's lavender candles burning in the office) and without the institutional look (scenic paintings hang on the wood and stone coloured walls). Because ironically, this dentist has always feared lying back in the treatment chair himself.

in business

In the Black

Black Press, through its subsidiary Sound Publishing Inc., has purchased 10 newspapers in King County Washington from Horvitz Newspapers, including seven bi-monthly publications, two weekly community newspapers and the daily King County Journal. Sound Publishing also publishes 17 community newspapers in the Puget Sound area, as well as the weekly Little Nickel Classifieds and Nickel Classifieds papers in Washington and Oregon. Black Press publishes more than 100 newspapers in Hawaii, Ohio, Washington State and western Canada – including the North Shore Outlook.