



CELEBRATE!

CDT & Dental Technician Appreciation Month

JUNE 2025



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By Trish Jones, RDH, BSc

Behind Every Smile: The Unsung Heroes of Dental Technology

When you have the best clients, what you do becomes more than just a job—it becomes a joy. As an Ivoclar Technical Account Manager, I don't see myself as someone out to sell a product. My goal is to become an extension of each dental lab I visit. And let me tell you, covering the Gulf South area, I've met some truly incredible people. Each lab is unique and every smile they restore carries their magic behind the scenes.



NB Milling

I often say: every lab has a story. Every technician has a story. These are the heartbeat of our industry. They're the unsung heroes, crafting the handiwork that rebuilds confidence and joy in the form of a smile.

Let me share just a few of these stories...

Texas Beginnings

The first lab I ever visited as an account manager was on a 13-acre ranch in Texas. I was nervous—Texas is known for its “No Trespassing” signs—but **Sebastian Freytag at NB Milling** welcomed me with open arms. It was his first time ever having a rep visit in person. That visit marked the beginning of not just a professional relationship, but a genuine friendship. And now, I even enjoy visiting the goats!

Mississippi Hospitality

In Mississippi, **Thompson Dental Studio** stands out. Family-owned and run by **Leah Fox**, the lab exudes warmth. She works with her sisters and nieces, treating everyone—clients and visitors alike—like family. When I visit, we always go to her favorite BBQ spot.

Then there's **Blackburn Dental Lab** in Jackson, where the owner **Randy Blackburn** delivers cookies to his clients during the holidays. He believes in a personal touch. One time, I arrived while they were celebrating 60 years of being in business and honoring his father for starting the lab. It was such a touching moment and I felt privileged to be there. His legacy lives on although his father has since passed.



*Edwin Kee, Master CDT, TE at
LSU HSC School of Dentistry*

Arkansas Surprises

Visiting **Jacksons Porcelain Lab**, CDL, in Hot Springs is always a treat. **Nick Perry**, CDT, is a car enthusiast and a master of detail—whether it's in restorations or classic car rebuilds. His talking parrot once imitated the UPS scanner so perfectly I looked for a delivery guy who wasn't there!

Louisiana Legends

Edwin Kee, Master CDT, TE at **LSU HSC School of Dentistry Central Laboratory Services**, CDL, is a beacon of passion and mentorship. His enthusiasm is infectious, especially with his students. The legacy he's building is exactly what this industry needs—positivity and purpose.

In Metairie, **Mike Bellerino**, CDT, at **Trinident Dental Lab**, always finds a way to update my headshot. A master technician and renowned instructor, Mike's photography skills match his technical ones.

Walking in Memphis

Innovative Dental Technologies is operated by two brothers, **Darin Thronson** and **Josh Thronson**, CDT. The lab is in a unique location in a former Sears Warehouse where they are all digital. Darin often says he plays dental video games all day when referring to CAD/CAM.



Jacksons Porcelain Lab



Nick Perry, CDT at Jacksons Porcelain Lab



Barksdale Dental Lab

Sweet Home Alabama

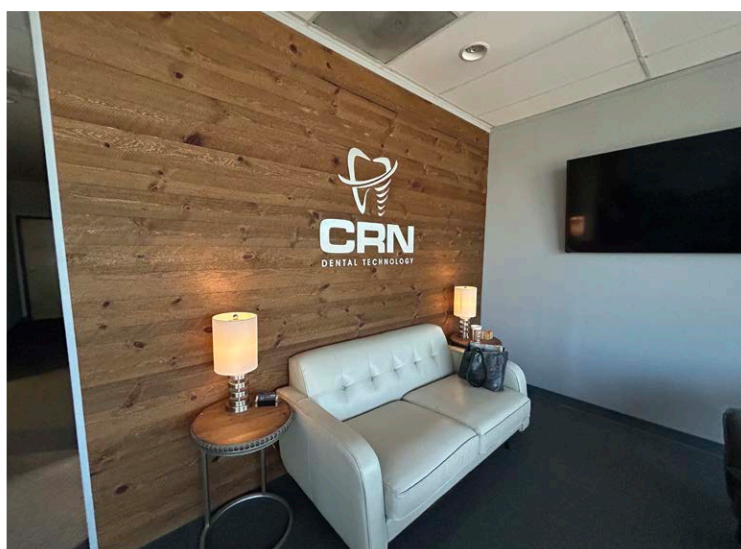
In Huntsville, **Barksdale Dental Lab** feels like a small family lab, even though it's one of the larger ones. **Blake Barksdale, CDT**, focuses on both client and technician well-being, and it truly shows. It's truly a huge family feeling at this lab, and it should, as a second-generation lab.

In Birmingham, **Chris Waldrop, CDT**, runs **Burdette Dental Lab, CDL** along with **Harold Burdette, CDT**, where innovation meets tradition. Their eagerness to learn and share the latest in the field is inspiring as well as staying high tech.

Two Stepping Back in Texas...

Where I live, driving to Austin, Houston, or San Antonio is no big deal—it's my local route!

In Austin, **CRN Dental Technology** owned by **Jason Ripple, CDT**, is a hub for continuing education. Jason even built a facility for in-house learning events—a true testament to his commitment to excellence and sharing his wealth of knowledge.



CRN Dental Technology

In San Antonio, **Art and Technology Dental Studio** is run by **Veronica Garza**, a former dentist from Mexico whose passion fuels the lab. She has deep faith, collecting crosses from around the world, and it shows in how she leads through challenges with grace.

Mascola Esthetics Dental Lab is a tech-forward powerhouse known for stunning All-on-X cases. **Albert Mascola, CDT**, a veteran and industry mentor, has trained countless technicians who have gone on to open their own labs. It's always a joy to step into this upbeat, high-energy space.

Houston's Digital Frontier

At **Contour Balance**, **Kevin Newton, CDT**, runs an all-digital lab. When I first visited years ago, it was just him, and I sat on his only seat, a drum seat in his office! Today, the lab has 25 employees. Fun fact: Kevin is also the drummer for the band "Blaggards."



Kevin Newton, CDT



Contour Balance Dental Lab





Esthetics Dental Studio

Nearby, **Esthetics Dental Studio** is **Jose Rincon**, CDT's dream realized. He started from scratch, building a stunning space filled with talent, including a technician I once worked with years ago in Las Vegas!

South Texas Strength

Near the Mexican border in Weslaco, **Hidalia Ocana**, CDT, and her sister have been running **Pro Dental Lab** for over a decade. Recognized in the implant world, Hidalia's joy and hospitality make every visit memorable. She is truly a beautiful soul inside and out.

It's Not Just About Sales. It's About Stories.

I wish I could mention every single client I work with, because they all mean the world to me. They share one common trait: passion for what they do. Their pride in their craft is unparalleled.

Being in this role allows me to witness their creativity, hear the wild stories behind complex cases, and see their eyes light up with excitement. Dental technicians are more than artists—they're magicians. Behind every restoration is a connection, a transformation, a renewed life.

I'm not just selling products or equipment. I'm supporting dreams, amplifying legacies, and helping these labs thrive. Each technician's success has a ripple effect, feeding their families, supporting their communities, and changing lives one smile at a time.

That's where the magic lies. **JDT**



Pro Dental Lab

