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TOP DOCTORS

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THE REAL STORY OF SANDRA BLAND

by Bryan Smith

IS CHICAGO A TERROR TARGET?

JOHN K. PONTIKES, DMD, FAGD

SEASONS DENTAL CARE®

Born and raised in Chicago, Dr. John K. Pontikes received his doctorate from Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine. Following dental school, he received advanced training in general and hospital dentistry during his residency at Northwestern University Medical School and Evanston Hospital. In 2012, Dr. Pontikes completed a mini-MBA program at Harvard Business School. While at Harvard, he received the tools and knowledge necessary to help him more effectively lead and manage his practice.

In 2013, Dr. Pontikes became a Fellow of the Academy of General Dentistry, an honor held by only seven percent of dentists nationwide. He strives to constantly keep current in the art and science of dental medicine and be an innovator in his field, further underscoring his commitment to being a master dentist. Dr. Pontikes is a certified member of the American Dental Association, Academy of General Dentistry, Chicago Dental Society, and Illinois State Dental Society.

As an oral physician with more than 15 years in clinical practice, Dr. Pontikes has performed thousands of procedures and placed thousands of restorations. He understands the importance of mutual trust and cultivation of the patient-doctor relationship, and has the right team and professional staff in place to address all your dental needs. As team leader, Dr. Pontikes coordinates, manages, and oversees your treatment from start to finish. He and his staff provide punctual and efficient care utilizing modern techniques and materials in a comfortable, spa-like atmosphere. Seasons Dental Care® is committed to the highest standards in quality and is appointed with the latest state-of-the-art equipment and cutting-edge technology.

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To determine our complete list of 270 dentists for Chicagoland Dental Profiles, we asked more than 1,300 Chicago-area dentists whom they would trust to treat their family and friends.

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SANDRA BLAND

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serious DWI charge was dismissed; she pleaded guilty to possession.

After she returned to Chicago, she accumulated a few thousand dollars in fines from two traffic stops. Then, in March 2014, she was pulled over in the western suburb of Lombard. Police charged her with a host of infractions, including speeding, disobeying a traffic signal, and failing to signal a lane change. More serious were two counts of driving under the influence. A court dismissed all the charges but one DUI count.

For the most part, the family plays down those infractions. “Think about those years, a couple of years removed from college,” Sharon says. “You’re still trying to figure out the essence of who you are. There’s a lot of self-discovery going on. I remember my 20s. I was all over the place.” But the 2014 DUI was a wake-up call. “I ripped her a new one when she got it,” Sharon says. “I said, ‘Sandy, sweetie, you are too smart for that. What were you thinking?’ She said, ‘Sharon, you’re absolutely right.’”

Then, two months later, Sandra suffered a much more devastating blow: She had a miscarriage. The family rallied around her. “I asked how she was feeling,” Sharon says, “and she said it was sad but that she would be OK. I remember her saying something a couple of months later that echoes an adage a lot of us in this family live by: that things happen for a reason.”

But Bland had not shared with the family the magnitude of her despair. According to her intake form at the Waller County Jail, she cited the miscarriage as the catalyst for a suicide attempt using pills. No family member had been aware of that attempt, but Sharon says it doesn’t shock her that her sister kept a secret from her: “Nobody in a person’s family knows everything. I think that she felt that I would have been hurt, and she didn’t know what my response was going to be.”

From the outside, though, it appeared that Bland had rebounded from the miscarriage, and within months she seemed back to her old self. In fact, in December 2014, she experienced what her family now calls a life-altering moment, one that sent her personal and professional trajectory on an upswing. She had seen the film *Selma*, and it affected her deeply—so deeply that she began contemplating ways to (continued on page 122)

Methodology

Chicago magazine commissioned an independent survey by DataJoe Research. DataJoe sent online ballots to 1,300 individual dentists and 850 practices in the greater Chicago area. Only licensed dentists practicing in the greater Chicago area were eligible to make the list. For a complete explanation of our methodology and to learn more about the peer-nominated dentists on this list, please visit chicagomagazine.com/dentalprofiles.