

# The Reinvention of a Great Guy!



Bruce Patterson is a man on a mission. He's put his heart and soul into Save a Smile Foundation to benefit Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

BY EILEEN GORDON

**L**ooks can often be deceiving. The perception of cleft lip and palate, the second most common birth defect in the world, is heartfelt by the founder of Save A Smile Foundation, benefiting Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Bruce Patterson is a well-known, well-loved Atlanta businessman. He's single, good looking, charming, funny and endearing. He has been tremendously successful in business and has supported just about every charitable endeavor in town. Bruce is the last guy in the world that you'd ever think had a particularly bad time in his life.

He stunned us all recently when he announced that he was spearheading one of the most significant fundraising endeavors in the South. And he opened up a very private, moving part of his life to inspire the community at large.

Bruce was born with a cleft lip and palate. Unbeknownst to many, this facial deformity (second only to congenital heart



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The Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Center for Craniofacial Disorders treats children from birth to age 21 with cleft lip and palate, tumors, skull deformities, microtia and traumatic injury. The Center performs 300 to 400 surgeries per year. In 2007 Children's provided more than \$98 million in unreimbursed care. It's up to the community to raise the money needed to provide what is possibly the finest care in the world for these very special families. No child is ever turned away.

defects) affects one out of every 700 births. It is heart wrenching for the parents and traumatic for the child. This condition requires years to decades of special surgical operations and orthodontic treatment, as well as speech therapy. It costs a fortune to treat.

Bruce was one of the lucky ones. His family had the financial resources to acquire the finest treatment available. Even with the love and support of his parents, Bruce's childhood memories include multiple hospital visits, surgeries, years of orthodontic procedures and difficult recoveries.

Bruce is particularly sensitive to the emotional stigma attached to this defect. A child's face with a cleft palate or craniofacial deformity is shocking to see. He remembers being asked as a child what was wrong with his mouth. He remembers what it felt like to be unable to eat or speak normally. He has memories of being taken out of class to attend speech therapy and feeling

the pain of self-consciousness. He became an overachiever in adult life to compensate for his own emotional scars. His mother has no photos of Bruce as a small child because, for his family, this was an unhappy time. There was no need for memories of what they had endured during the years it took to achieve the incredible physical and aesthetic correction of this deformity.

Bruce had reached a crossroads in his life resulting in this most passionate quest. He's dedicating his heart, mind and personal wealth to Save a Smile, along with the help of an impressive collaboration of close friends. The foundation will collect and direct funds to the Children's Center for Craniofacial Disorders to support individual families in need and to continue research and development of the most advanced and effective treatment for children born with a craniofacial disorder. Bruce Patterson himself is living proof of the worth of this effort.