



Mary Schmich

Plastic surgeon gives schools a different lift

Botox. Could that really be the secret to an education makeover in Chicago's public schools?

That was my first thought when I plucked a curious flier out of my home mailbox last week, its four hefty pages as sleek as new skin.

"You are invited!" it said.

"Chicago's annual health, wellness, beauty & style event is here!" it said.

"A fundraiser for anyone who wants to feel good, live well and look great!" it said, and who wouldn't want that?

For \$20, in the grand ballroom of the Chicago Ritz-Carlton on Sept. 28, I could get two cocktails and see live Botox treatments. Could use the latest technology to see what I'd look like after a face-lift. Learn which cosmetic fillers allow celebrities to fake their age. Discover which size and shape of breast implants are most appealing.

And do it all for the children.

This seemed like such a novel way to raise money to promote, in the brochure's words, "literacy and ongoing education to students of the Chicago Public Schools" that I couldn't resist calling the guy behind it, Dr. Steven Dayan.

Dayan, it turns out, has received his share of publicity before, in print and on TV. He's a plastic surgeon, researcher and assistant clinical professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as the host of Girls Night Out parties in his Water Tower Place office, where women periodically gather to eat, drink and savor an apres-dinner Botox injection.

'These were young kids asking the best questions I'd ever had.'

—Dr. Steven Dayan

Not long ago, he stirred a small buzz with a study in which he asked women in Los Angeles and Chicago, ages 49 to 51, at what age they thought they had looked best. The L.A. gals said 26. The Chicago gals, taking a more mature view of life and beauty, said between 34 and 35. Both sets of women agreed that men looked best at 41, which is good news for Dr. Dayan, who is 39.

But back to the fundraiser and our conversation, which mercifully was not held face-to-face, because if it had been, he would have felt professionally obligated to halt our talk and put me into emergency treatment.

Born and raised in Chicago, the son of a Moroccan father and father himself to three little girls, Dayan likes to teach.

Amiable and ardent, he likes teaching consumers the difference between good and bad cosmetic enhancements. That's why, he said, he started a small annual event five years ago that brought together consumers, mostly his patients, and responsible suppliers of various cosmetic enhancements.

(Beware, he says, of those facial toners on late-night TV that leave you looking shrink-wrapped.)

He also likes teaching kids. Last spring, as part of the Chicago Public Schools' Education to Careers program, he visited Sullivan High School on the Far North Side, where an entire floor had been re-created as a hospital ward. He taught students about his job, including how to suture on oranges.

"I was blown away," he said. "These were young kids asking the best questions I'd ever had."

The annual event was raising so much money for charity—\$10,000 last year, they say—that he formed a not-for-profit organization, Enhance Foundation. Hoping to raise even more this year, he decided to work with the schools and dedicate the money to a college scholarship fund.

As unusual as I found Dayan's brochure when I first saw it, and even though his benefit is undeniably good PR for the suppliers who participate, I came away from talking to him, and to

an enthusiastic schools official, simply appreciating how many ingenious ways and different kinds of people it takes to educate kids in Chicago, where there's never enough to go around. And I got my own education.

"What is skin mapping?" I asked, eyeing the brochure.

"It's a way of looking at the skin to determine certain areas where hydration might be needed," he said, "or areas that have gotten too much sun."

Or as the brochure puts it: "Find out the truth about your skin, you won't believe what you see!"

Yikes. Isn't that how most of us past 35 feel just looking in the mirror in the morning?