

New Alabama Dental Laboratory Combines Function and Style with Digital Dentistry

Dream lab space incorporates safety and versatility

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When Barksdale Dental Lab recently unveiled its new laboratory, it was filled with features that place it squarely in the new world of modern digital dentistry. Having grown out of its previous space after more than 20 years of steady growth, Barksdale designed a dream lab in a new 12,000 square foot building, using durable modular and adjustable workstations from Lista. Equipped with a unique CAD/CAM technology and milling center, versatile facilities for conducting continuing education programs, and a state of the art dust collection system, the new lab is a sparkling showpiece for employees and doctors alike.

Busy laboratory needs room to grow

Steve and Betty Barksdale, owners of Barksdale Dental Lab, have spent 28 years building their business founded on the principle of producing extremely high quality products, made entirely in America in their own facilities. The lab, which specializes in cosmetic all-ceramic solutions and removable partial and full dentures, began operations in 1986.

By 2010, the lab had grown from a one-man shop to a full service lab with more than 50 technicians crowded together in a cramped 4,500 square foot building. The Barksdale's made the decision to move to a larger space that could better fit their present needs as well as their plans for growth. They began the quest for the dream lab by purchasing a building in the Jetplex Industrial Park, located adjacent to the Huntsville International Airport.

New facility gives lab a blank slate in which to advance technologically

After purchasing the building in March 2013, the Barksdale's began by gutting the 10,500 square foot building and added 1,500 square feet of space, for a total of 12,000 square feet. The 6-acre property still has plenty of room for future growth and expansion. High on the design list was to improve the working environment for their technicians by providing an attractive break room as well as adjustable height benches that could suit their varied workforce. The new space was also to be aesthetically pleasing with vibrant colors, excellent lighting, and an overall well-functioning workflow.

Fitting out the space with sturdy and versatile workstations

The team had decided to install all new equipment and benches in the new laboratory. After getting their vision down on paper, they went looking for the right workstations. Seeking to find equipment that

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reflected their decades-long reliance on American-made quality, they met with Lista at the Chicago Lab Show. Lista makes its equipment, benches and cabinets in Massachusetts and in Burlington, Ontario.

While their competitive price was a factor in the decision, the number one reason for selecting Lista was the quality of the product. "The quality was evident in everything they produce, including the cabinets and benches, and all the materials they used."

The Barksdale's began the process by sending their facility blueprint to Lista and selecting benches from the Lista product offerings. Lista's CAD drafting department worked with Barksdale to lay out the areas and ensure the most functional footprint. Lista worked

to ensure sufficient space to move chairs, suggested corrective lighting over benches, and helped to design cabinetry for the materials that had to be stored.

Lista also worked to make sure the quality control areas had the proper lighting and sinks, and that all fabrication was conducted in a way that would provide the longevity Barksdale was looking for. According to owner Betty Barksdale, "Lista's regional sales representative, Steve Alexander, was involved in every phase of the project, from layout and design to installation and all aspects of project management. He was frequently onsite to make sure the project was done to our satisfaction and within the time frame we needed."

For the technician's workstations the Barksdale's selected Lista's modular Arlink 8000 workstations with the integrated downdraft module. This unique system interfaces seamlessly with Zubler's central vacuum system within the stations. Single side configurations were used around the perimeters of the work areas, and double side configurations were used for the islands in the middle of the rooms. Each workstation is equipped with its color-corrected lighting, case pan shelves and drawers. For the design department these same workstations were used, adding computer storage and personal storage, but without the downdraft modules. Since the modular Arlink workstation is reconfigurable, it can be altered for multiple functions and workflow changes. Lista cabinets in multiple configurations and with stainless steel worktops provide both flexible and durable storage throughout the lab. Wall-mounted and easily adjustable case pan shelves provide accessible storage for all work in process.

The modular nature of the product line resonated with the team because the stations can be reconfigured based on the need of the technician which comes in handy with five different departments, each with a different workflow.

Says Barksdale, "The products we chose are an all-around great new concept for the dental lab industry. With all the other competitors, you are offered products that can be configured only one way." She gives the example of why the Lista benches work so well within their lab. "If you have a person who is 5 foot 2 inches and another who is 6 feet 3 inches, we

can adjust the table height to a level of comfort. It suits technicians and can still be aesthetically appealing throughout the lab. It is a nice design and extremely well thought out."

Dust collection and control makes this lab unique

A lot of dust is created in a dental lab, where technicians use a hand piece for sculpturing with a model. The Barksdale's opted for a FZ VARIO central vacuum system made by Zubler USA LLC. The FZ VARIO system provides suction at all hand piece positions, as well as any other dust-producing devices. Lista worked closely with Zubler to ensure a smooth and functional integration of their suction system with the benches and cabinets.

Make way for digital dentistry

The new digital world finds its home in the Barksdale CAD/CAM technology center. Using the fully electronic system, the lab can now make a zirconia crown in an incredibly fast 3-5 day turnaround.

The wow factor

Lastly, Lista matched the company's blue and gray colors to the new stations. "Employees couldn't believe how great it looks and come to us thanking us for the change and telling us how much they appreciate the new equipment and healthier environment," said Barksdale. "People have more pride and are cleaning around their areas. They like having a facility for a break room. Already we've noticed an increase in productivity."

She adds, "It has been a joy to work with Lista. They have been there every minute of the job. They fulfilled the order on time. The installers came in on time and did a fabulous job. I even got a call from the President of Lista, thanking us for selecting them. It is refreshing to know people who reach out and thank you for your business."

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