

## Meet Dr. Williams

John M. Williams, DDS, ABFO

Minneapolis, MN

General Dentistry and Forensic Odontology

In 1974 with two NFL Super Bowls under his belt, football pro John Williams decided to pursue his passion for dentistry. Then playing for the Baltimore Colts, he went to college during the off seasons to earn a dental degree from the University of Maryland at Baltimore. He officially retired from the NFL in 1980 after 12 years and established a dental practice in the inner city of Minneapolis.

"Part of our responsibility as dentists is to motivate and educate, as well as treat," said Dr. Williams, who welcomes the opportunity to encourage his patients, especially impressionable youth. "Over the past 23 years, we have been a resource for many patients."

In addition to running a successful practice, Dr. Williams is trained in forensic dentistry and is a member of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, a program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Following the September 11 tragedy in New York City, he participated on the identification team at the Chief Medical Examiner's Office. "It's what we are trained to do, but we couldn't help feeling a little squeamish when we had to identify the first body," he said.

During the early years of his dental career in a changing and struggling inner city, Dr. Williams said he had to make a tough decision -- to stay or to relocate to the suburbs. He was determined to stay in the city and make a difference. Today he's proud of the choice he made. "The city is starting to come back; my patients respect what I did; they continue to come; and their children and grandchildren are now patients," he said.

Each day, besides getting up, which he calls a blessing, Dr. Williams welcomes "being a good neighbor by providing service to my community, as well as to people in need. We cannot turn our backs on people who are suffering from health care disparities. If all dental and medical professionals participate, we can address the problems."

However, he recognizes responsibility also needs to rest on individuals. "There is a personal responsibility to participate in preventive care instead of getting into a crisis situation," he said.

Dr. Williams, the father of three adult boys with wife, Barbara Butts Williams, is also a pilot and is closely involved with a Prison Ministry Team. "We go in thinking that we are giving something to them, but we end up on the receiving end. It's so gratifying to see the growth of so many of these men."