

Once in a while, you encounter talented physicians who also happen to be extraordinary people who give back to the community in so many ways. After meeting with Austin, Texas-based plastic surgeon Dr. Jennifer Walden, it was easy to relate to her philosophies in the medical field as well as her outlook on life.

When I first learned about Dr. Walden two months ago, she was a finalist for the Woman's Way Business Award in the Health and Wellness category. This year, finalists were chosen from over 150 nominees across the city. Ultimately, only 3 finalists in each category proceeded to the next round of evaluation. She told me, "It was particularly gratifying for me, as I have built my practice with an all-female team and my client base is mostly women. I love running a company built on the passion and can-do attitude of women helping other women look and feel their best," explains Dr. Walden. "It is also great to live and work in Austin since the city has traditionally been supportive of female-owned business. It is growing by leaps and bounds with active (and aging) people in the workforce who want cosmetic services, so the practice is economically sound as well."

Dr. Walden is an aesthetic plastic surgeon and she recently expanded the nonsurgical part of her practice, The MedSpa at

# Dr. Jennifer Walden

## EMPOWERING WOMEN ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LEVELS

*By: Jody Joseph Marmel*



Walden Cosmetic Surgery and Laser Center, into a new physical location adjacent to the office that houses her surgical practice. She performs surgery of the face, breast, nose, genitals, and entire body within the privacy of her fully-accredited office operating room. Some cosmetic surgery is improving upon the results of previously performed reconstructive surgery of the breast and cosmetic surgery of the body, nose and face. "I often perform secondary or revisional cosmetic surgery. I also pay homage to culture, race, ethnicity, and genes when I perform a procedure on someone."

Being one of only a handful of female board certified plastic surgeons who is formally trained in aesthetic plastic surgery in Texas makes for an interesting career. Although around 92 percent of all cosmetic surgery patients are women, the field of plastic surgery is heavily male dominated. Dr. Walden adds, "My patients often tell me that they appreciate that I help them look like they themselves want to look. I listen to them in the process so that they're a partner in the decision-making. I think this can be validating to them, and in a sense empower us both."

### Strong Women Supporting Strong Women

While it is quite unique to have an all-female team in the practice of surgery, Dr. Walden and her staff of 16 women are able to provide a comfortable, supportive, non-judgmental environment and years of experience in helping patients achieve the look they desire. "Each one of my staff members is a vital part of the team, which is necessary to function smoothly and effectively, just as in a soccer or basketball team. Without them, I couldn't do what I do inside and outside of the operating room. They provide me with support when I am facing personal and professional challenges that I have to deal with and get through. And they will also just

point me in the right direction at my office when five people all want me at the same time." Dr. Walden's MedSpa practice manager and lead injector/aesthetcian Kristin Gunn describes the team as "Strong women supporting strong women." It is apparent that the team philosophy extends to the patients as well.

When I asked Dr. Walden what inspires her, she told me, "I can relate to much of what was written in Sheryl Sandberg's 2013 book, "Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead." A couple of things that really hit home for me were: Don't take "no" for an answer. Women can, and should, have everything they want in life—personally and professionally. They deserve a rewarding career and a loving family. They shouldn't sacrifice one for the other. If you face an obstacle, try a little harder—or find another way to make it happen."

“ I STRIVE TO OFFER A COMFORTABLE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT, COUPLED WITH YEARS OF TRAINING WITH THE BEST, AS WELL AS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THAT ALLOWS ME TO HELP PATIENTS ACHIEVE THE LOOK THEY ARE SEEKING. ”

She added, "I remember reading a review of the book in The New York Times, and the writer's description stuck with me. She wrote, "Leaning in can promote a virtuous circle: you assume you can juggle work and family, you step forward, you succeed professionally, and then you're in a better position to ask for what you need and to make changes that could

benefit others.' Isn't that the truth?"

Dr. Walden has been fortunate to have mentors throughout her life and career who encouraged her to step up to the plate and become a leader. "Without them," Dr. Walden emphasizes, "I wouldn't be where I am today, and I feel it's important to do the same for others." While Dr. Walden is the boss and very hands-on in the company as the surgeon, the visionary, and a consistent driving force of the business over the years, she encourages a collaborative and communicative approach when it comes to maintaining and improving the operations of the practice.

"It is an ever-growing entity . . . a real living and breathing thing that requires constant attention and patience," Walden states. "Wow—that sounds like having a baby," she added laughingly.

For a long time, Dr. Walden's practice was enough for her. Early on in her career, her priority was to become a plastic surgeon and marriage was low on her priority scale. At 38, once she established her practice, tests revealed conception would be difficult. She then made what she feels is the best decision of her life "By choice, I gave birth as a single mother. This was probably the most challenging phase of my life." After an extensive search for an anonymous sperm donor and failed attempts at conception through intrauterine inseminations, she eventually conceived through IVF and gave birth to twin boys, Houston and Rex. "They are my life's greatest blessing."

Getting a glimpse into Dr. Walden's private life is important so that women can visualize a female who can run a practice and have a unique and fulfilling family life. She has a male au pair from Capetown, South Africa and he is in his second year with the family. He extended his stay since it was a good fit living

with the family. "The boys love him," Dr. Walden emphasizes, "He is a positive, fun, athletic and an intelligent man for them to be around." He also helps with whatever chores in and out of the house need to be done. There are no strained dynamics or issues of who does what, as there very likely may be when a woman with a high-powered career enlists her husband in taking on all of the domestic tasks that the woman usually does in a married relationship. "It cuts through all of that quickly, and enables us to get our jobs done easily without any strained relations. It is crystal clear what each of our roles are, and there is no pressure for things to get done burdened by the typical American gender stereotypes of male and female household and childcare duties."

### Born and Raised in Austin "A Rare Unicorn"

Dr. Walden is a proud born-and-raised Austin native. The reason she moved her practice from New York City back home to Austin was to be close to family while raising her boys. But, there are a plethora of wonderful opportunities the Capitol City has to offer.

The Austin area is known for conditions that support great businesses. Our "creative class" culture is fed by our diversity, quality of life and focus on education. "Highly educated professionals from all over the world come to Austin to enjoy the Hill Country setting, innovative vibe and powerful job market. With Austin's supportive and diverse community, businesses of all kinds can thrive here." Austin's attractiveness as a place to live and work is a huge draw for companies looking to establish corporate and regional headquarters. The new medical school is a prestigious



addition to the healthcare community.

Walden adds, "I recently flew home from a conference, and the CEO of a major healthcare tech company that has many plastic surgeon and dermatologist clients, sat down and introduced himself to me. It was cool that he lives here in Austin and has grown his digital marketing company here as well, right down the road from me. He demonstrated his online services on his laptop as I told him he had me as a captive audience until we landed!"

Austin also has a strong technology infrastructure supported by a multi-tiered workforce. These conditions combine to create one of the strongest business environments in the United States. Dr. Walden's alma mater, The University of Texas, and surrounding universities, as well as the high-tech industries, offer an innovative and largely educated workforce.

Austin is renowned for its quality of life and its attractiveness as a place

to live with a relatively low cost of living. "It's a 'green' city," Dr. Walden explains. "Its people are among the fittest in the nation. This makes recruiting for new employees relatively easy, and I get new patients from all over the country almost weekly."

### A Supportive and Comfortable Environment

"I strive to offer a comfortable, supportive environment, coupled with years of training with the best, as well as experiential learning that allows me to help patients achieve the look they are seeking." Dr. Walden adds, "I want my patients to make well-informed choices that are in their best interest and I won't do surgery unless I can achieve the best results possible with informed consent regarding the potential risks and complications of a procedure."

This is important since some cosmetic surgery patients think or hope that their plastic surgeon is a "magician." "In fact, I am not. I can't erase scars; I can't make you look like a celebrity, and of course, I can't create 100 percent symmetry or perfection." She tells her patients that she wants them to look like themselves, and when all is said and done, just a refreshed or more rested version. For some patients, the best recommendation is to do nothing, and she is able to say and do that if a patient she consults with is not mentally or physically equipped for a surgical procedure.

Patient safety is also something Dr. Walden makes her priority. She does not want her patients to have any problems under her watch, or complications that are preventable. She always thinks 'how would I do things if this were my mother, my brother, or sister who was the patient on the operating room table?'



basis, Walden makes presentations at national conferences about laser techniques with facelifting, breast implant and fat grafting surgery, vaginal rejuvenation, and social media in the aesthetic industry.

Dr. Walden enjoys serving in leadership of The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) and she is the Commissioner of Communications and a member of their Board of Directors. She spends much of her free time either with her twin boys or working on projects for this prestigious organization, that is the most respected group of board-certified aesthetic plastic surgeons in the world.

raised funds for research in blood cancers. "I raised the most money behind Amanda Bush, who fought in honor of Barbara Bush and raised a record-breaking amount on a national level. For the amount I raised, I was bestowed the honor of a research grant by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society for advanced research into pediatric blood cancers."

She is a member of the Guardian Angel Society, a philanthropic group of individuals who provide support to abused children served by Austin's Center for Child Protection, and also supports the Junior League of Austin's Food in Tummies (FIT) program, designed to provide weekend nourishment to elementary school children who qualify for free or reduced meals. She has also served on the local Executive Leadership Team of the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign in Austin to help bring awareness to female heart disease. With her twins entering first grade soon in a top Texas public school district, she has most recently become a sponsor for Forest Trails Elementary School and the Eanes Education Foundation to help fund teachers.

I learned, once I researched and interviewed her, that Dr. Jennifer Walden is quite a successful doctor and is known throughout the country for her expertise, skills and advice. She is also a wonderful mother and juggles the two parts of her life on a daily basis. "I place my boys first and work hard so that they will be taken care of no matter what happens. Being a single mom who is by definition always 'on call' for my patients has at times meant staying at home instead of going out with friends or traveling. But, I chose this and I wouldn't trade it for anything else."

Visit [www.drjenniferwalden.com](http://www.drjenniferwalden.com) or call (512) 328-4100 to learn more.

## An Innovator in the Field

Dr. Walden has a strong commitment to technology which in turn has helped her grow her MedSpa. She uses an industry-leading 3D imaging technology that can help a patient visualize their "look" after surgeries such as a breast lift, augmentation or rhinoplasty.

She is also the first medical professional within the Austin and Central Texas area to use both the diVa laser and ThermiVa radiofrequency for noninvasive vaginal rejuvenation, the SmartGraft device for single follicular unit hair transplantation, and she is the first plastic surgeon to use SculpSure for laser fat reduction. Dr. Walden serves as a spokesperson and luminary (key opinion leader-KOL) to leading medical aesthetic companies such as Sciton Inc., Cynosure, Lumenis, SmartGraft, and Thermi Aesthetics. On a regular

Dr. Walden is frequently asked to comment on health and beauty topics in print magazines and on local television. She is regularly asked to participate in local television network lifestyle segments such as "Beauty and Beyond" on KEYE TV-CBS Austin and says, "Another one that we are going to film more for this summer is KVUE TV-ABC's 'Looking Good and Living Well with Dr. Jennifer Walden.' Austin is a big small town and it's nice to know the people at each of the television networks here in town."

## Giving Back

"I feel good when I give back to the community I was born and raised in. Austin is trying to keep up with its growth so I hope I can help in some small way," Walden states.

In June of 2016, Dr. Walden was named runner-up for Austin's Woman of the Year by the Austin Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. This campaign