



I'm a Sheltering Arms kid [and the first doctor in my family.]

“My mom was a single parent struggling to support two kids,” says Dr. Erika Sibbie, “but she made sure I had the strongest start possible.”

New to Atlanta and to a temp job with Delta Airlines, Erika’s mother, Alexis, discovered Sheltering Arms through an advertisement for affordable child care, and enrolled Erika and her sister at ages 4 and 1. Both remained in the program until starting Kindergarten. “I remember being in class and participating, working on letters and numbers, going to recess, and the applesauce we ate for lunch,” says Erika. “I’ll never forget that applesauce for some reason.”

These long-ago memories hint at the deeper benefits Erika’s mom says she and her family received as a part of the Sheltering Arms family—even the fabled applesauce plays a part: “My children went on field trips, ate balanced meals, and were well cared for,” Alexis says. “Sheltering Arms allowed me to work a full-time job and not worry about affording day care, or about where my kids were. I felt very comfortable leaving them in this very good program.”

Both women can draw a clear line between what Sheltering Arms offered and Erika’s success today as a dentist in LaGrange, Georgia. Early support helped open doors, turned an early love of reading into high school honors and college at the Medical College of Georgia’s School of Dentistry, which sparked a career in medicine. It also gave Erika the perspective and motivation to give back. Today, she’s part of a practice that devotes 60-70% of its time to serving children in need.

“I know what it’s like to have a single parent and maybe not have all the things kids typically have, to shop at Goodwill and wear hand-me-down clothes,” Erika says. “I can relate, and I can also tell them, ‘You’re not defined by your environment. You can do anything. And if I can do it, so can you.’”

P.S. As Erika works to give her young patients a nudge toward a lifetime of wellness and success, the legacy of smart, early starts continues. Remembering the experience she had with her own children, Alexis recently recommended sending her grandchild to Sheltering Arms as well. The second generation left our program last year, moving on to success in elementary school.