BELMONT, Calif.—“Ugly” Betty braces wearers, according to ArchWired.com.

ArchWired.com, an adult braces Web site. Most ArchWired.com readers love the show and applaud Betty’s spirit—but they hate the stigma that braces make a person unattractive.

A poll of ArchWired.com readership last April showed that 56 percent said that they looked fine and felt proud in their braces, or that the braces were a non-issue. In addition, in another poll done last December, 64 percent said that their braces did not negatively impact job interviews—unlike the character Betty, who was initially rejected from a job because of her braces.

The popular TV show has been a hot topic on the Web site’s Metal Mouth Message Board. “To be rejected from a job because of her character Betty, who was initially rejected from a job because of her looks,” said one reader. “Every time I’m at my orthodontist’s office I see a steady stream of good-looking adults...better-looking than average.”

In general, ArchWired.com members think the show is smart and funny. “They channeled the awkward ugly-duckling stage that every girl has had at some point... and combined it all into one character,” said a reader from Boston.

Another reader lamented: “It’s a catch-22 stereotype. People say braces equal geeky and frumpy. Yet how many times have you heard someone say ‘why doesn’t she just get her teeth fixed?’”

While some ArchWired.com readers wear invisible aligners or lingual braces that are behind the teeth, most sport traditional braces like Betty and have to deal with the same insecurities and stigmas as the show’s zany character. “I applaud Betty for not hiding her braces or being ashamed of them,” said Lynn Schneider, editor and owner of ArchWired.com. “She is confident and doesn’t hesitate to flash a huge smile. In this age of instant makeovers, Betty sets a beautiful example for adult orthodontic patients who need to give traditional braces time to work,” Schneider said.

According to the Web site’s most recent reader poll, Betty falls into the largest age demographic of adult braces wearers. The majority (52 percent) of the survey’s 1,463 respondents are between ages 18 and 29. The next age group, 30 to 49, represents 42 percent of respondents—proving that braces are not just for kids anymore.

Adults get braces for many reasons. Many ArchWired.com readers say their parents couldn’t afford to provide orthodontic treatment when they were younger. “I got braces at 25 because I wasn’t dependent on my parent’s money and, with no kids, I wouldn’t feel guilty about spending that much money on myself,” said one poll respondent.

More than one million adults in the United States and Canada wear braces, according to the American Association of Orthodontists. As orthodontic technology improves with braces that are clear, ceramic, smaller or “invisible,” more adults are opting to fix their crooked smiles. And age is no barrier—almost 20 percent of ArchWired.com readers are over age 40.

ArchWired.com is the largest and most popular site on the web for adults in braces, with hundreds of informational web pages, and more than one million unique visitors since its inception in March 2002. The site’s Metal Mouth Message Board has more than 4,000 registered members worldwide. Schneider created the Web site when she became an adult orthodontic patient at age 41 and saw a need for an online adult orthodontics community.

AAO announces seminar

The American Association of Orthodontists is inviting specialists and general dentists to attend its interdisciplinary conference, “Multiple Disciplines, One Focus,” Feb. 9 to 11, 2007, in Indian Wells, Calif., near Palm Springs.

The meeting will feature experts in orthodontics, periodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, and restorative dentistry.

They will share information about the treatment of orthodontic patients who have multidisciplinary problems.

Speakers include program co-chairs Drs. Donald R. Joondeph (AAO president) and Vincent G. Kokich, and Drs. Bjorn Zachrisson, Sverker Toreskog, Gregory A. Kinzer, Jim Janakievski, Dale A. Miles, David M. Sarver and David A. Garber.

Topics are to include evidence-based treatment, interdisciplinary management of gingival discrepancies and interdisciplinary management of vertical discrepancies, an update in oral and maxillofacial radiology, dentoalveolar esthetics, integrating interdisciplinary care in rural areas, use of maxillary posterior ostotomies to maximize esthetic or restorative results, an update on surgery and the role of dental implant rehabilitation in orthodontic care, and the impact of digital technology on restorative dentistry and materials. www.aaomembers.org

Orthodontist buys back Halloween candy from kids

HILLSTON, Vt. — Taking a radical approach toward preventive dentistry, a local orthodontist conducted a Halloween candy buyback. Orthodontist Dan Ryan paid trick-or-treaters $1 per pound, made a matching donation to the Committee on Temporary Shelter, and donated the candy to a local food bank.

He says his goal was to promote a healthy Halloween and contribute to the community.

“Halloween is a fun holiday for kids of all ages, but too much candy can contribute to tooth decay,” he said.

Kids wearing braces are especially at risk. Hard or sticky candies, such as the ones with caramel and nuts or gums, can get into braces and prevent the teeth from moving, thus lengthening the treatment, he said.

Ryan urges his patients to eat soft candies, such as peanut butter cups, and brush their teeth soon after eating them. “We understand that kids are going to have candies,” he said.

The campaign was based on an idea from the American Association of Orthodontists, Ryan said. Its members conduct activities nationwide to promote the benefits of orthodontic treatment and to educate the public about protecting their teeth during Halloween, he said.

Last year, Ryan collected about 200 pounds of candy that were shipped to Tanzania, where it was distributed by a former patient who was a Peace Corps volunteer.

Kim Gammon of South Burlington brought her three trick-or-treaters, Cooper, 5, Tyler, 5, and Cameron, 1, into Ryan’s office where they sold 6 pounds of candy.

Selling back the candy was a way, “to help others and to make sure they don’t eat all that candy,” she said.

Sources: http://cbsboston.com www.burlingtonfreepress.com