

Special Edition

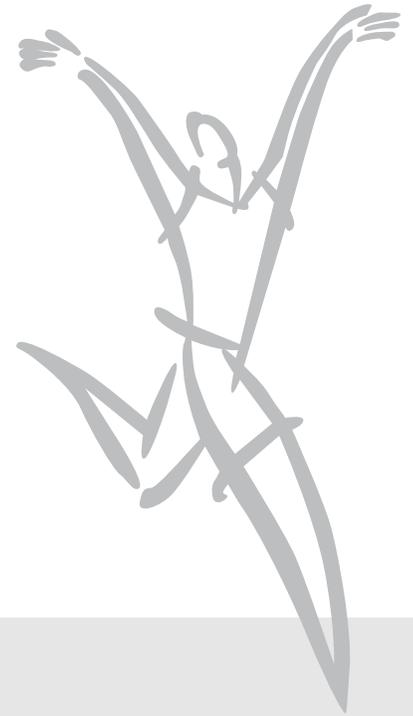
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Caring for Our Own

Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery at SVCH Helps Severely Overweight CSA/UH Caregivers Get a Second Lease on Life

Gastric bypass surgery is one of the fastest growing surgeries in the country — and for good reason. Today, morbid obesity (also referred to as clinically severe obesity) is second only to smoking as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, annually killing more than a quarter of a million people. It's estimated that 11 million Americans are morbidly obese — which is typically defined as being 100 pounds or more overweight.

Gastric bypass surgery offers new hope for qualified patients who have been unsuccessful with other weight loss methods. For a number of Caregivers in the CSA/UH family, the surgery has given them a second lease on life. This special edition of *Pacemakers* features three Caregivers who struggled with severe obesity for years until they found a medical solution through gastric bypass surgery at the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery at St. Vincent Charity Hospital.



What Is Gastric Bypass Surgery?

The Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery uses a refined version of what is known as the **Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery**, which is endorsed by the National Institutes of Health for its long-term effectiveness. During surgery, the stomach is divided into unequal parts, creating a pouch about the size of the top half of the thumb. This new, smaller part of the stomach is joined, via a surgically created "stoma," to a segment of the small intestine. After Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery, patients' food intake is limited to small portions, and they typically must avoid heavy concentrations of sugar or greasy foods, which can cause discomfort. Most patients will reach their healthy goal weight within 18 months of surgery.

"The first treatment of choice for obesity of any degree is diet and exercise. But obesity can be a genetically-based disease that often can't be overcome through diet or willpower alone," says Helmut Schreiber, MD, medical director and founder of the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery and director of surgery at SVCH. "Surgery — and the change in eating habits it causes — is a proven way to manage and control obesity when other options have been exhausted."

Ending a 24-Year Struggle

Trina Stewart's diabetes had gotten so bad, she was injecting insulin twice a day and taking additional medications throughout the day. At more than 300 pounds, Trina knew her weight was a big part of the problem. The trouble was that she had been struggling to lose weight since the birth of her son, who was born in the late 1970s. Name the diet, and chances are Trina had tried it. She'd lose 40 pounds only to regain 50.

With her diabetes continuing to spiral further out of control and other health problems popping up, Trina knew she would have to try something new. That's around the time she saw a television advertisement about bariatric surgery. She began researching surgical weight loss options and programs at Cleveland-area hospitals.

"I worked at SVCH, so I was comfortable with the doctors and staff at the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery," says Trina, who has worked in the SVCH Admitting Department as a patient interviewer for five years. "But I still looked at other hospitals to find the best program. I found the Center had the most thorough program and everyone was much more personal."

After months of learning about the procedure and debating whether it was the right choice, Trina underwent gastric bypass surgery on January 29, 2002, at the Center. Today she is 130 pounds lighter and her 20-year battle with diabetes is under control — she's free of diabetic medications and injections. Persistent back, knee and ankle pains also have disappeared, and she feels more energetic than she has in years.

Such substantial weight loss has Trina's mind trying to catch up to her body. She admits being a creature of habit, still heading for the plus-size section in clothing stores "It's a great feeling to try on clothes that are way too big for me," she says. Trina acknowledges there have been bigger challenges along the way, but going into it, she knew surgery was not an end in itself. She's worked hard to get to where she is today, crediting her success to committing to a different lifestyle following surgery and the support she's received from the CCBS staff.

"The staff has been really outstanding, from helping me decide if surgery was right for me, to the support given months after surgery," Trina says. "Dr. Sonpal also did a great job with pre- and post-surgical support. Everyone went over and above the call of duty to make me feel comfortable. It's nice to know there's such a great resource right where I work."

Looking back, Trina knows she made the right decision. She cites the change in her health as the greatest benefit. "Even if I hadn't met my goal to lose 100 pounds, it would still be worth it because my diabetes was so far out of control," she says. "I can't believe I'm off medication for the first time in 20 years."

What's next for Trina? In October, she'll attend her "graduation" ceremony, an event established several years ago to celebrate patients from the CCBS who successfully achieve their weight goal. She also plans to get married in October.

"It's been an amazing journey," says Trina. "I would do it again if I had to because I've benefited so much from the surgery."



Caregiver Trina Stewart has lost 130 pounds and is off of medication for the first time in 20 years.

"It's nice to know there's such a great resource right where I work."

By the Numbers

As a senior accountant at the Central Business Office (CBO) in Brecksville, numbers have always been important to Dale Gutschmidt. But one number in particular stood out – his weight. Dale weighed more than 360 pounds. For nearly a decade, Dale unsuccessfully struggled to lose weight through diets, medications and special programs. Severe obesity was taking a tremendous toll on his body and his quality of life. He suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure, joint pain and life-threatening blood clots.

"I tried everything, but nothing worked," says Dale. "I had no energy, I was crabby all the time and it was difficult to enjoy some of the things I loved, like playing golf and shooting pool."

Dale recalls reaching a turning point during a family trip to Chicago when he had trouble making it up the steps to a museum. "Those steps almost killed me," he says.

"That's when I knew surgery might be my only hope. I was 41 and wanted to live to see 50."

A little more than two years after surgery, Dale has lost 120 pounds. He's gone from taking five different medications a day to only taking vitamin supplements. Best of all, he now has the energy to do things he could only dream about prior to surgery. On a recent Sunday, he played 18 holes of golf in the morning and went for a 10-mile bike ride in the afternoon. He's even training for a two day, 150-mile bike ride in August.

The weight loss is easy for Dale's co-workers to see, but they've also noticed other changes in him. "Dale is calmer now," says Phyllis McHugh, administrative assistant, CBO. "He has a more positive outlook and is much easier to work with. The changes brought on by the surgery have made such a positive difference."



After losing 120 pounds, Dale Gutschmidt has been enjoying active hobbies such as golf and biking.

"The changes brought on by the surgery have made such a positive difference."

Keeping Up With the Kids

Keeping up with three busy boys and a career can be taxing for most mothers. For Caregiver Vanessa Nelson, the burden of extra weight made being a career mom even more difficult to manage. After years of dieting — she'd tried nearly every diet in the book, only to end up gaining additional weight — Vanessa decided to explore bariatric surgery.

Vanessa spent some time doing research on all of the different surgical weight loss options available in the area, finally choosing to have her surgery at the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery. "Being a nurse at St. Vincent Charity Hospital, I was aware of the successful outcomes at the Center," says Vanessa. "The Caregivers involved in my surgery and care treated me and my family with the utmost confidentiality, caring and respect." Since her surgery, Vanessa says that many people, including fellow Caregivers, have used her as a resource for information about bariatric surgery.

Now that she's 110 pounds lighter, Vanessa's boys have a hard time keeping up with her. "I have a new philosophy on life — I can take on the world," Vanessa says. "If I can do this, I can do anything. I can get up and go for family activities. Having weight-loss surgery was the best decision I've ever made — now I'm in control."



Experienced Staff and Comprehensive Program Key to Success

Since the gastric bypass procedure is a major surgery, it's important to choose a program that combines surgical expertise and a highly skilled surgical team with proven experience performing this specialized operation.

With more than 30 years of combined experience, surgeons at the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery have performed more surgical weight loss procedures than at any other hospital in the region – 3,000 to date and counting. Experience learned from those 3,000 operations places the Center at the forefront of bariatric surgery, research and innovation. It's also led to the best safety record in the nation, and the development of a comprehensive program that extends beyond surgical success.

"The surgery is only 30 percent of what the Center does," says Helmut Schreiber, MD, medical director and founder of the CCBS and director of surgery at SVCH. "We provide comprehensive services that help people make behavioral changes they must make in order to get the most benefit from surgery."

The Center's services include extensive pre-screening to determine whether bariatric surgery is right for each patient, post-operative care in a specially staffed and equipped unit, an extensive follow-up program and access to ongoing education — such as support groups, psychiatric care and nutritional counseling.

"There are so many physical and emotional changes that accompany rapid weight loss," says Courtney Holbrook, MD, a program psychologist for the Center. "That's where the Center does an excellent job in providing an extensive support structure to help patients prepare for and cope with all the changes."

In addition to Dr. Schreiber, who has performed more than 1,700 bariatric surgeries since 1979, the medical team includes three additional surgeons — Indukumar Sonpal, MD; Linda Patterson, MD; and Aviv Ben-Meir, MD. The CCBS medical staff also includes a pulmonologist, anesthesiologist, gastroenterologist, cardiologist, endocrinologist and psychologists. The CCBS support staff consists of four nurse specialists, a dietician, office personnel and 20 patient volunteers.

The extensive experience of the Center's staff and its comprehensive approach, says Schreiber, is responsible for its high patient-satisfaction rate, and a higher rate of patients losing and maintaining weight loss than achieved through similar programs.

To find out more about surgical weight loss and the Cleveland Center for Bariatric Surgery, call 1.888.362.9732 or visit www.stvincentcharity.com.

MISSION

Faithful to the philosophy and heritage of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the St. Vincent Charity Hospital/Saint Luke's Medical Center family is committed to the healing mission of Jesus. As Caregivers, we serve with; a deep respect for the dignity and value of all persons, our practice of quality care, our dedication to the poor, and, our commitment to education.

VISION

St. Vincent Charity Hospital/Saint Luke's Medical Center provides for the ever-changing health care needs of a diverse population. It is a model in Northeast Ohio for a Catholic, mission-driven, community centered, urban healthcare delivery system. Our commitment to the community can be witnessed by the availability, accessibility, quality and cost of all services provided through our team of physicians, Caregivers and volunteers in partnership with University Hospitals Health System.

VALUES

Respect: We serve in an atmosphere of mutual respect and fairness, treating each person with reverence and dignity that recognizes each individual's contribution.

Integrity: We hold ourselves accountable for our actions and are honest and ethical in all our dealings.

Quality: We are committed to continuous improvement of our services to better each life as if it were our own.

Team Work: We celebrate the opportunity to come together as caregivers in an inclusive workplace where diversity and open communication are valued.

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