



Before



After

REDISCOVERING Her Identity (and the Joy of Shopping at Old Navy)

Talk to Stephanie Bongiorno of Lambertville, NJ and you may use words like enthusiastic, gregarious, and self-aware to describe her. But at the very bottom, when she hit her lowest low during her struggle with her weight, she describes herself as apologetic for everything; exhausted; and at one point, suicidal.

Age 12. That's when weight started to become part of Stephanie's consciousness. Spurred by her father moving out, Stephanie quickly began to use food and her ensuing weight gain as a way to retain some sense of control in her life.

Fifteen pounds was the starting point. She ate whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted.

"I couldn't control him leaving and I couldn't keep him home, so this was something I could control," she says.

Her weight gain embarrassed her father and her journey through diets and diet doctors began. But the gaining continued, and she and her sister started to joke about who could gain the most weight.

By the time Stephanie got married for the first time, she reached 200 pounds. While her husband didn't care about her weight gain, he did worry about her health. For Stephanie, it was a slow spiral toward losing her identity.

"I did try," she says. "If there was a diet, I did it. And if I lost 50 pounds on it, I gained back 60."

It was her lack of identity and her highest weight of 270 pounds, which ultimately became her turning point.

That pivotal moment came when she decided that she was going to try to take back control of her life.

"I was a confident, bubbly person who didn't take crap from anyone and I was losing that," she says. "I apologized for things and I took ownership of everything bad that happened. Everything became about my weight. It was who I was."

At that point, she knew she had to "get it off her," both the weight and the burden of knowing she was losing sight of who she was.

"I was doing everything for everyone else. It was time to take myself back."

Having already exhausted every imaginable diet and failing at integrating a meaningful exercise routine, she turned to a surgeon for help.

But the surgery led to health problems. It was at that point that she found **DR. CHUNG**, the only surgeon Stephanie could find who would go back in and correct the initial surgery.

"When I met Dr. Chung, I remember thinking she was a woman who was no

holds barred and would say what she needed to say. I completely trusted her right then and there, and said I'm ready to do it. I didn't even have to go home and think about it," Stephanie says. "I remember thinking at that first meeting with her 'this woman cares AND she knows what she's doing.'"

Dr. Chung did gastric bypass surgery on Stephanie and it was finally the game changer she needed. Now 160 pounds, Stephanie says her confidence in Dr. Chung was immediate and that it was a partnership every step of the way.

"When I first met the psychiatrist who was doing my evaluation before I could have the surgery, he told me, 'Dr. Chung's going to be right on you because she cares.'"

"I'm more devoted this time because Dr. Chung is so devoted. You also don't want to disappoint her," Stephanie says. "I gave her everything and I turned myself over to her. I don't always do that."

"This is a tool. It's not a cure," she continues. "But for me it's been life changing."

"I'm brighter and lighter. I talk to more people. I make more friends. I'm back to who I was, and I stand up for myself again," she says with a laugh. "I'm also shopping in Old Navy and that's awesome too."



FREE Weight Loss Surgery Information Sessions Wednesdays, April 27 or May 11, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell, One Capital Way, Pennington, NJ

Led by DR. JOOYEUN CHUNG, medical director of the Capital Health Metabolic & Weight Loss Center, our free weight-loss information sessions are designed for patients considering weight loss surgery at Capital Health. Please arrive 10 minutes early to register.

Sign up online at capitalhealth.org/weightloss or call **609.537.6777**.



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INSIDE OPERATION



The following is an excerpt of a feature story written by Jessica Downey with photographs by Robert Bruschini for Real Woman magazine's winter 2016 issue. If you're interested in reading more, visit realwomanonline.com where you can find digital editions or sign up for a free print subscription.

When we're asleep in the operating room, the entire surgical team is working. But there's a person in the room whose eyes are intently trained on us and whose job it is to advocate for us while we sleep. Is the room warm enough for us? Is everything properly hooked up and attached? Have we been in one position for too long? While everyone else in the room is working on our behalf, the operating room (OR) nurse is our eyes and ears.

CUT OUT FOR THE OR

While many other nurses may want to shift disciplines, OR nurses often stay put. They crave the fast pace, the energy of each surgery, and the every-day-is-something-different mentality. Registered Nurse Stella Donnell, who has worked as a nurse for Capital Health for her entire 25-year career, is a case in point.

"I knew when I graduated from Trenton State [now The College of New Jersey] that I wanted to get into the OR. But at the time, nurses didn't leave the operating room. When they went there, they stayed because people loved their jobs," Donnell says. "So I started on the floor, but luckily for me a position opened up about seven months after I started. So I got in and I've been there ever since. And I love my job."

Donnell says that when a new nurse starts, she can often tell if he or she is going to be a fit for the operating room over the long term. "The OR is an incredible challenge, but it's just not for everyone," Donnell explains. "We have a new surgical tech here who is so excited, and you can see it on her face. You can just tell. Either someone has the personality and they are really into it, or they're not."

Before the surgery even begins, you can read on Registered Nurse Lauren Krosnick's face that she's exactly where she wants to be. Like Donnell, she knew from a young age that she wanted to be a nurse (she regularly helped her parents care for ill relatives who lived at her childhood home), and the OR presents a daily challenge that suits her. "I love the challenge of the OR—the surgical aspects, learning the equipment and the instruments, and anticipating what comes next," Krosnick says.

Being quick on your feet is certainly a requirement, Donnell says, but organization is key, a refrain she's often reminding new surgical nurses. "You have to know how to anticipate what's coming," she explains. "You have to be constantly forward-thinking so you can prepare for any scenario."

Getting the surgical room sterilized and ready is a significant part of the job, but during surgery, it's all about doing what needs to be done to help execute a successful surgery. "You do everything from

hooking up the instruments to scratching someone's nose," Donnell says. "Once the procedure is started, you're kind of running around doing everything and charting when you get a minute."

OUR ADVOCATE

As the guardian of a patient's physical and emotional state before and during surgery, an OR nurse must be a caretaker in the truest sense. This is especially the case for surgeries like mastectomies, in which a patient is in the throes of a battle with breast cancer and is about to face a body-altering surgery.

Capital Health has made a significant investment in its breast center, and Donnell is the team leader for plastics in the OR, which means she works on a lot of mastectomies and reconstructive surgeries.

"When the patient first comes into the operating room, I let her know that I'm there and I'm going to take care of her. I don't like to be running around doing things. I'm there with her until she falls asleep," she says. "You have to get all the business done, but in the end, it's all about compassion. I want to be there holding her hand, keeping her warm, with my hands on her. It just makes her feel better because she is in this room with all these lights, and everyone else is multitasking."

Seeing that transformation from the beginning of the surgery to the end is a part of the process Donnell still finds amazing. "For patients that come in knowing they have cancer and need to have a mastectomy, but are having immediate reconstruction and when they wake up they're going to have breasts, to help them through that and have everything the doctor needs, it's very rewarding," Donnell says.



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**CAPITAL HEALTH MEDICAL GROUP IS
PLEASED TO INTRODUCE
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Whether it's scheduling a wellness check-up, managing chronic medical issues, or you're not feeling well, advanced medicine starts with your primary care doctor.

Now you can schedule appointments with **Dr. John Stabile** or **Dr. Michael Stabile**, a father-and-son team board certified in family medicine, at our **Hamilton office**, convenient to Hamilton, Robbinsville and other nearby communities.

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A focus on **FAST RECOVERY** from Joint Replacement



At Capital Health, highly trained orthopedic surgeons perform cutting edge procedures for knee and hip replacements that result in less pain after surgery and a shorter healing process.

DR. MICHAEL AST, a fellowship trained orthopedic surgeon at the Marjorie G. Ernest Joint Replacement Center of Excellence at Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell, answers three frequently asked questions about rapid recovery after joint replacement.

To Find a **CAPITAL HEALTH ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON**, visit capitalhealth.org/ortho.

1 What is Rapid Recovery?

Rapid recovery is the state-of-the-art recovery program after total joint replacement that allows patients to get up and move very quickly, most often on the same day of surgery. This enables patients to recover faster and return to their normal activities in a fraction of the time that it took in the past. It also promotes improved pain control and patient independence by allowing patients to go directly home from the hospital as opposed to a nursing home or rehab center.

2 Why does it matter?

Not only are patients much happier when they are able to resume their activities more quickly after surgery, there are also a number of other benefits. Rapid recovery programs, like the one at Capital Health, decrease the risk of complications such as blood clots and heart attacks, and may even reduce the risk of infection.

3 What determines how fast I will be able to recover?

Rapid recovery programs are based on the combined effects of dramatically enhanced pain control, state-of-the-art anesthesia, outstanding surgery, and exceptional physical therapy. At Capital Health, the multidisciplinary team, including the orthopedic surgeons, anesthesiologists, specialized nursing staff, and care coordinators, has developed a first-class rapid recovery program highlighted by patients experiencing less pain, shorter hospital stays and improved overall outcomes.

MEET DR. MICHAEL AST



Dr. Michael Ast is fellowship trained in adult reconstruction and joint replacement surgery from the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. He grew up in Staten Island, New York, and attended Temple University for undergraduate and medical school. He specializes in primary, complex, and revision total joint replacement surgery and has a special focus on pain control, rapid recovery, and outpatient joint replacement surgery.

Thinking About Joint Replacement at Capital Health?

Call 609.394.4153 or visit capitalhealth.org/events to sign up for one of our upcoming events:



ARTHRITIS IN WOMEN: Gender Differences in Hip and Knee Replacement

Monday, May 2, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
NJ PURE Conference Center
One Capital Way, Pennington, NJ 08534

Arthritis is the leading cause of joint replacements, and because women have higher rates of arthritis than men, more women are in need of joint replacement surgery. Join **DR. ARJUN SAXENA**, a board certified orthopedic surgeon, to learn what to expect from surgery and have your questions answered. A physical therapist from Capital Health Rehabilitation Services will also be available to discuss what to expect after surgery.



HIP & KNEE REPLACEMENT: Talk to the Team

Tuesday, May 17, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
NJ PURE Conference Center
One Capital Way, Pennington, NJ 08534

DR. HARI BEZWADA, medical director of the Marjorie G. Ernest Joint Replacement Center of Excellence at Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell, will be joined by representatives from departments involved in hip and knee replacement surgery to provide a complete picture of your joint replacement surgery and answer your questions.

UPCOMING HEALTH PROGRAMS

Unless otherwise noted, call 609.394.4153 or visit capitalhealth.org/events to sign up for the following programs.



capitahealth

Minds Advancing Medicine

TANGO FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE

9 SESSIONS | 1– 2 p.m.

Thursdays, May 5 – 26 and June 2 – 30, 2016

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$30 per couple for all nine sessions. Individual registrations also accepted.

Do you have Parkinson's Disease? If so, please join us for our Tango Series. People at all stages of the disease are welcome. Professional dancers, ANTON GAZENBEEK and JODY PERSON, both have extensive training in Argentine Tango. Participants will enjoy learning to tango and experience physical, cognitive, social, and emotional benefits. Register by calling 609.537.7157.

OSTEOPOROSIS 101

Tuesday, May 10, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell

Join DR. DEBORAH SIEGEL-ROBLES from our Capital Health Primary Care – Princeton office, part of Capital Health Medical Group, for a conversation about osteoporosis: its causes, prevention, and treatment. Also, join JANICE PESCO, Director of Rehabilitation Services, and learn exercises you can do to improve bone health.

SNORING IS NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT

Tuesday, May 10, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health – Hamilton

Sleep apnea is a condition where you repeatedly stop breathing during sleep and is often tied to loud snoring and gasping. If left untreated, you can experience high blood pressure, heart rhythm irregularities, morning headaches, and excessive daytime sleepiness. Join DR. SWETHA VODDI, sleep medicine specialist from our Capital Health Center for Sleep Medicine, to learn more about sleep apnea, how it is diagnosed, and what you can do to treat it and vastly improve your overall health.



PEDIATRIC ASTHMA

Wednesday, May 11, 2016 | 6 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
NJ PURE Conference Center

Pediatric (or childhood) asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases in infants and children and often difficult to diagnose. Join DR. RAJEEV SHAH, director of the Pediatric Hospitalist Program at Capital Health, to learn about the signs and risk factors, as well as how to find the right treatment plan to control symptoms.

STROKE MONTH SCREENINGS

Friday, May 13, 2016 | 1 – 3 p.m.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
or

Friday, May 20, 2016 | 1 – 3 p.m.

Capital Health Regional Medical Center

Strokes can be prevented through early intervention. As part of National Stroke Awareness Month, Capital Health will offer comprehensive stroke screenings at its hospitals in Trenton and Hopewell. Get screened and receive information on things you can do to help lower your stroke risk. Registered nurses will also conduct a stroke risk assessment and provide counseling.

Comprehensive Stroke Screenings include:
Free – Blood Pressure, Pulse, Carotid, Body Mass Index.
Cholesterol Screening (including HDL and Blood Sugar) will be provided for only \$10.

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
One Capital Way, Pennington, NJ 08534

Capital Health – Hamilton
1445 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Hamilton, NJ 08619

Capital Health Regional Medical Center
750 Brunswick Avenue, Trenton, NJ 08638

JOIN US FOR THE MARCH OF DIMES® MARCH FOR BABIES — MERCER COUNTY 2016

SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2016

9 a.m. (registration at 8 a.m.)

Mercer County Park, West Windsor, NJ

Register online at marchforbabies.org and be sure to sign up for or donate to our Capital Health team (#N739)!



RANDI A. AXELROD, MD, FAAP
Director, Neonatal Intensive Care
at Capital Health
Chair of the March of Dimes®
March for Babies –
Mercer County 2016

SPRING ANTIQUE APPRAISAL LUNCHEON

Sponsored by the
Capital Health Auxiliary's Children's-House Committee

Friday, June 3, 2016 | 11:30 a.m. | \$20

Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell
NJ PURE Conference Room
One Capital Way, Pennington, NJ 08534

Bring ONE antique item to be appraised —
June Crowther, Appraiser
Owner of June's Antiques, 36 Coryell Street, Lambertville, NJ

For more information, please e-mail auxiliary@capitalhealth.org.

