



FEATURES

**Her goal for '09: Lose more weight**

*Sawyer pleased with results so far after lap band surgery*

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It was just over a year and four months ago that Gini Sawyer resolved to end her yo-yo dieting days and face her obesity problem head on.

So she decided to put her faith in the relatively-new lap band technique being performed by the father and son team of Drs. Arthur and Adam Glasgow at Caritas Norwood Hospital.

Her faith, so far, has been rewarded. Since that time she has lost 100-plus pounds. As she looks to the New Year, she sees 2009 as the year she will reach her goal weight, thanks to behavior modifications and newly well-established eating habits.

As a result of the procedure, Sawyer's whole eating regimen has been redirected. As Sawyer says, "I no longer live to eat but rather eat to live."

The lap band technique got its start with a gastric band patented by a Swedish company in 1985.

By 1993 an American company developed and introduced into the European market a lap band system that could be used in keyhole surgery.

The new model had an added self-closing mechanism that eliminated the need for any sutures.

In 2005, the Glasgow duo were on the cutting edge offering the technique as a choice for those with chronic or severe weight loss problems. The minimally invasive surgery, which allows for fewer complications, takes less than an hour in the operating room after which the patient can go home the next day.

Follow-up involves adjustments being made to the hollow ring that is wrapped around the upper part of the stomach and locked into place. Depending on the patient, the size of the opening, which controls the passing of food between the two parts of the stomach, is adjusted by the surgeon. In fact, if the patient for some reason the patient cannot tolerate the band, it can be removed as easily as it was put in.

Two words -- behavior modification -- have taken on a great deal of importance to overcome the bad eating habits Sawyer had acquired through the years. No longer does she eat on the fly. It wasn't far into the program that she recognized the importance of establishing eating patterns.

"Sit down; cut up your food into small pieces; and eat slowly," was Dr. Adam Glasgow's mantra to Sawyer.

She learned early in the game not to drink liquids with her meal, as the lap band does not allow the food to



Gini Sawyer

go down easily and could cause a back-up. "He wasn't kidding," says Sawyer of the doctor's warning.

One of the first things most people want to do after a large weight loss is to go out and buy clothes. Sawyer, who has not always been overweight, found no need to go out and shop.

"I have two closets full of clothes ranging from size five to size 24," she adds pointing out she could open her own thrift shop. Thus, she went shopping in her own closet and has yet to buy anything new. She said she is ready to part with the "really fat clothes."

When she first opted for the operation, she had the support not only of family and friends, but also of the "regulars" she serves every Thursday and Friday evening dinners to at The Common Eatery and Cafe. That has not changed. "Customers have been phenomenal," adds Sawyer. They have been there every step of the way. There isn't a Thursday or Friday evening when she doesn't hear someone say "Skinny is here."

Sawyer will be the first to tell you there have been bumps along the way.

"For a while I got into a stress eating mode. I was living on chocolate and cheese puffs which went down very easily," she adds. She just as she puts it "got sick of eating healthy and got sidetracked." She knew intellectually that she wasn't doing the right things and thinks that hearing accolades from her customers made her conscience step in and get back in step with the program.

If you asked her if she feels she has become more outgoing as she has lost weight, she reply with a firm "No." She's always had high energy and a gregarious personality which drew her to people. However, she openly admits "I feel a lot different and am now beginning to like the way I look."

In her heavier days, the outgoing happy person was at times a façade. In essence, while she doesn't feel she has changed a lot but rather how she feels about herself. At a recent Christmas family gathering she loved hearing comments like "You look like your old self of 20 years ago." After hosting weekly pasta dinners for her son Dillon's football team, he confided that some of his friends remarked that his "Mom looks pretty good!"

Another common question is whether she thought about having the lap band removed or had she thought about doing it when reaches her goal weight? The idea has never crossed Sawyer's mind. For her ,the band did what she could not do for herself - develop portion control. As she amusingly says, "I can't overeat. The extra food has no way to go but UP!" A

s for treating herself to something special as a reward for how far she's come, she smiles and says "I treated myself to a bathing suit which I wore on a trip to the Virgin Islands." She hadn't worn a bathing suit for years!

Looking ahead to 2009, she'll continue to go on enjoying life to its fullest and working to reach that final goal -- just 40 pounds away. Her doctors are pleased with her slow but steady progress. It's exactly as it should be.

Who knows, she's volunteered for years behind the scenes of the Pan Mass Challenge. Perhaps next year she'll fulfill a comment she made to her son who also volunteers to step on her bicycle and start training to ride at least one leg of the journey as a start of something new.

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