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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TIPPAH MOM LOSES WEIGHT, GAINS LIFE BACK

RIPLEY, Miss.— Rebecca Sullivan of Falkner needs all the energy she can muster to keep up with her three young children and a busy nursing career. Now that she has lost more than 100 pounds thanks to weight loss surgery and a new lifestyle of healthy eating and exercise, keeping up is much easier.

Sullivan's weight problems date back to her teenage years. "My father died when I was 12, and after that it just escalated," she said. "I have had issues with weight ever since." She tried every diet program imaginable to lose weight, and even lost 60 pounds once on the Atkins diet. Unfortunately, she gained it back plus some over the next several years.

Like many people who are overweight, Sullivan took medication daily for high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and experienced problems with insulin resistance. Her weight also contributed to infertility issues and, after several years of failed treatment, she and her husband adopted two children—siblings Desirae, now 10, and Austin, now 8.

"I inherited a lot of health issues. My mother died at age 62 after suffering from heart disease, strokes and kidney disease," she said. "I was determined not to die young and leave my children, if I could do something about it."

Sullivan was thrilled when North Mississippi Medical Center opened its Bariatric Center in September 2007. After researching weight loss surgery she attended a free informational seminar by Terry Pinson, M.D., a general and bariatric surgeon who serves as the center's medical director.

Dr. Pinson performs three types of bariatric (weight loss) procedures—laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery and laparoscopic vertical sleeve gastrectomy.

The most common weight loss surgery, gastric bypass creates a very small upper stomach pouch—less than one ounce—by transecting the stomach. Because it doesn't

take much food or liquid to fill the new, small pouch, the person enjoys eating a lot less. In addition, food is not absorbed as well as it once was, contributing to rapid weight loss.

In laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery, a silicone band is placed around the upper part of the stomach and filled with saline. This creates a new, smaller stomach pouch that can hold only a small amount of food. The gastric band is the least invasive of the three procedures, as it does not require stomach cutting and stapling or gastrointestinal re-routing to bypass normal digestion.

Laparoscopic vertical sleeve gastrectomy generates weight loss by restricting the amount of food that may be consumed without bypassing the stomach or a portion of the small intestine. A portion of the stomach is removed and a new stomach pouch is formed. This particular procedure helps to reduce the sensation of hunger by possibly eliminating some of the gastrointestinal hormones responsible for the hunger pains. The stomach is reduced in volume but functions normally so most food items can be consumed but only in smaller portions.

After discussing her options with Dr. Pinson, Sullivan opted for the gastric bypass procedure in October 2007. She lost 20 pounds preparing for surgery and has since lost another 83 pounds. She was taken off blood pressure and cholesterol medication immediately after surgery, and she is no longer subject to nagging pain in her back and knees.

Shortly after surgery, the Sullivans were blessed by another surprise. They had the opportunity to adopt a newborn named Emma.

“I’m smaller than I ever thought I could be, and I’m happy with my size,” Sullivan said. “Now I can get out and play with my children, and keep my energy level up a lot better than I could before.”

To learn if bariatric surgery is right for you, talk to your doctor or visit www.nmhs.net/bariatric_center.

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Sidebar

Why Weight?

Dr. Terry Pinson and his staff will present a free Bariatric Educational Seminar from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, May 4, at Family Care Clinic of Ripley, located at 1331 City Avenue North. Topics will include weight loss surgery’s health benefits and risks; different types of weight loss surgery; who is a good candidate; questions to ask a

physician; what to expect before, during and after surgery; advanced techniques and technologies; and insurance coverage. To register or for more information, call 1-866-908-9465.