

January 6, 2010

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## **SURGERY CREW TOGETHER THROUGH THICK & THIN**

TUPELO, Miss.—Eight staff members of North Mississippi Medical Center's Surgical Services can testify firsthand that the Bariatric Center changes lives for the better.

Four Short Stay Surgery employees, two from Recovery Room and two from Anesthesia Services have undergone weight loss surgery since NMMC's bariatric surgery program began in 2007. Terry Pinson, M.D., who serves as medical director of the Bariatric Center, performs three types of weight loss procedures— laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery and laparoscopic vertical sleeve gastrectomy.

Kim Wilson, a registered nurse from Fulton who works in Anesthesia Services, was the first and has lost 80 pounds since having laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery in October 2007. In this procedure, 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.

In December 2007, Pam Stein, a registered nurse from Tupelo who works in Anesthesia Services, had laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery and has since lost 85 pounds. "I have been overweight my whole life, but it wasn't until I turned 40 that I realized I had to do something about it," Stein said. "I love being able to get out and play tennis without my joints hurting, being able to exercise and just feeling good at the end of the day."

Four staff members had laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery in 2008: Tammy Sullivan of Nettleton, who works at the Surgical Services information desk, in February; followed by Renee Haithcock, a registered nurse from Vina, Ala., who works in Recovery Room in June, film clerk Donnie Thornton of Amory in August and Short Stay Surgery's Amy Harrington, a registered nurse from Houston, that December.

“I had a lot of medical problems before that I don’t have now,” said Sullivan, who no longer takes daily medication and has changed her eating and exercise habits. “I feel good about myself and I feel good when I get up in the mornings.”

Haithcock, who had battled her weight since she was a child, said she was tired all the time and knew her weight would lead to serious health issues. Now that she has lost 82 pounds, she says the best part is “being able to wear normal size clothes.”

For Thornton, surgery was the one tool that worked. “I’ve been on a lot of different diets and when I’d lose, I’d usually gain back more than what I’d lost,” Thornton said. After surgery she lost 95 pounds and was able to stop taking her blood pressure medication.

Harrington has lost 90 pounds over the last year.

Also in December 2008, Lee Byars, a registered nurse from Houston who works in the Recovery Room, had laparoscopic Roux-en-Y gastric bypass. Byars had been diagnosed with hypertension and sleep apnea, and was beginning to have problems with her joints. “I started trying to diet, and the regain would be greater every time,” she said. “The weight just continued to go up over the years.”

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 just over a year Byars has lost 135 pounds. “In my job I’m on my feet all day long. I find now that when I go home at the end of the shift, I feel good,” she said. “My energy level has improved. I’m able to get out and play basketball with my nephews and enjoy the time I spend with them.”

Rebecca Patterson, RN, of Short Stay Surgery started having weight problems after her first pregnancy almost 16 years ago, and her weight escalated after a back injury two years ago. Patterson has already lost 56 pounds since having laparoscopic adjustable gastric band surgery in June 2009. “My lifestyle has changed tremendously,” she said. “I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

All agree that they are inspired by each other’s success. We have a good support group,” Thornton said. “You see others losing and it makes you want to do better. If we don’t do right, we get on to each other.”

For anyone considering surgery, Byars offers this advice: “Spend some time researching all the options that are available and make an informed decision as to what kind of surgery you want to have... and do it. It’s worth it.”

To learn if bariatric surgery is right for you, talk to your doctor or visit [www.nmhs.net/bariatric\\_center](http://www.nmhs.net/bariatric_center).

### **Cutline:**

NMMC Surgical Services employees Lee Byars, Kim Wilson, Tammy Sullivan, Renee Haithcock, Donnie Thornton, Amy Harrington, Rebecca Patterson and Pam Stein all look and feel great after having weight loss surgery at NMMC.

### **Sidebar**

#### **Why Weight?**

North Mississippi Medical Center will hold a Bariatric Educational Seminar from 6-8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, at the Wellness Center, 1030 S. Madison.

Bariatric surgeon Terry Pinson, M.D., will speak. Pre-registration is held from 5-5:45 p.m., and interested individuals may bring one guest.

A free seminar is held the first Thursday of each month at the Bariatric Clinic, located in Suite C at 408 Council Circle, and at 6 p.m. the third Thursday of each month at the NMMC Wellness Center. The seminar is mandatory prior to an initial consultation at the NMMC Bariatric Clinic. Call (662) 377-SLIM (377-7546) or 1-866-908-9465 for more information.