

*Working in the healthcare field, Greenville resident Shauna Treat always knew the importance of wellness. After years of struggling with being overweight, she finally decided to take action.*

## Old jeans

It's hard for Shauna Treat not to tear up as she holds up the size 20 jeans she wore before her weight-loss surgery.

"Unless you've been overweight, nobody understands that struggle of waking up in the morning and looking in the mirror and not liking what you see," said Shauna, recalling a lifetime of trying everything from diets to diet pills to working out, only to gain back the weight she lost.

At 37 years old and 246 pounds, Shauna found herself finally ready to make a permanent change.

"For probably about 19 years I've been overweight and struggled with it. I've done every yo-yo diet and crash diet there was and would have a little success, but nothing that was permanent," said Shauna.

"About three years ago I started checking into bariatric surgery. I'd checked into different places and I knew a lot of people that had had it, but I had a lot of concerns," said Shauna, who decided to attend a free bariatric seminar with Dr. Viet Phuong, a surgeon with Hunt Regional Medical Partners Surgical Associates.

"I thought, what better way to find out about bariatric surgery than from a doctor. And so I actually took my mom and we went and listened to him. He had a lot of great information, was very informative, and so I left my contact information with them," said Shauna, who set up a consultation the next day.

In the beginning, Shauna thought she would just learn more about the process. But after meeting Dr. Phuong, Shauna knew she was ready to move forward.

"Dr. Phuong is amazing. He guided me, he was very informative, very positive, and reassuring," said Shauna, who set a weight-loss goal of 100 pounds—a goal she was told might be out of reach.

"I was told that with the gastric sleeve, I might only lose 60 or 70 pounds. But I was determined," she said.

After her pre-operative appointments, which included nutritional, physical, and psychological evaluations, Shauna underwent gastric sleeve surgery on June 8, 2015.

## More than weight loss

Including gastric bypass, gastric sleeve and other types of weight loss surgery, bariatric surgery refers to an entire family of procedures that alter the stomach and digestive system. By limiting the size of the stomach and the absorption level of

calories, surgeons are able to control the amount of food that can be consumed, leading to weight loss.

"Besides the weight loss itself, the benefits of the surgery are many. It improves self-esteem and can help patients live a longer, healthier life," says Dr. Phuong.

In addition to the side effect of weight loss, bariatric surgery has also proven itself as a way to reverse many of the diseases related to obesity including type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, and cardiovascular disease. Increased self-esteem, independence, and longer lifespans are also among the benefits attributed to losing weight.

For Shauna, that increase in self-

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SHAUNA TREAT





BARIATRIC SURGERY PATIENT SHAUNA TREAT TALKS ABOUT HOW SHE WENT FROM  
AVOIDING HER REFLECTION TO REFLECTING JOY

# I chose Hunt Regional

TO CHANGE MY STORY

> BY CHELBIE BIRDWELL



esteem and happiness have changed her entire outlook on life.

“I’ve rediscovered things in life that I enjoy. I enjoy being outside, I enjoy running. Running is something I never thought I’d do again. When you weigh 246 pounds, that’s the last thing you want to do. Now I enjoy working out,” she said.

“The surgery was a tool. It wasn’t just, oh I had surgery and now I’m going to lose all this weight. But it was a tool. And that’s what I liked about Dr. Phuong. He explained those things to me and reassured me and was there every step of the way,” she said.

Because she works in a medical office located inside the hospital’s professional building, Shauna was already comfortable with Hunt Regional. Now, she says her appreciation for the staff—particularly the surgery department—has grown even more.

“The day I had my surgery, they knew I was a little nervous. They talked to me. They were wonderful, the whole surgical staff. They were very informative before and explained the process and all of the steps,” said Shauna.

“The staff there is fabulous. They treat you with dignity. They are caring, loving, and supportive,” she said.

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to permanent lifestyle changes. Shauna’s success may seem extraordinary. But because of her willingness to work hard, she has been able to reach her goals.

“I pushed. A couple of days out I was already walking. Within six weeks of recuperating, I was working out. I tell everyone, this is to help you, this is to guide you, this is your tool. But you have to work for it. How well you use it determines your success rate,” she said, adding it has been exciting to watch her husband and children join in her celebration.

In the 17 months since her surgery, Shauna has lost a total of 120 pounds and perhaps more importantly, has maintained her weight loss. Although she doesn’t plan on ever wearing them again, it might come as a surprise that she has no plans of tossing her old jeans.

“I keep them hanging in my closet. They’re a reminder of where I came from, how far I’ve come, and a place that I don’t ever want to go back to. And they keep me motivated. They inspire me. They are, I guess, a piece of who I am,” said Shauna.

By telling her story, Shauna says she hopes to inspire others who may be considering weight-loss surgery.

“I know the process, I know the journey, I know the struggles, but I know how rewarding it is in the end. And I owe it to Dr. Phuong,” said Shauna.

“If I had to do it all over again, I would today,” she said.

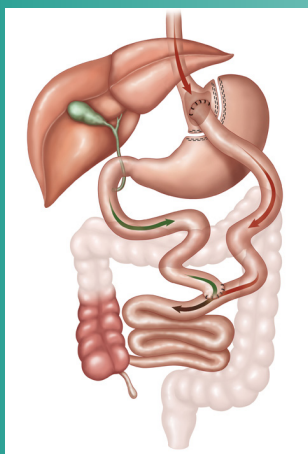
## Reaching her goal

Although bariatric surgery is now a common procedure, it’s not a quick fix and it isn’t right for everyone. The long-term success of bariatric surgery depends on the patient’s ability to commit

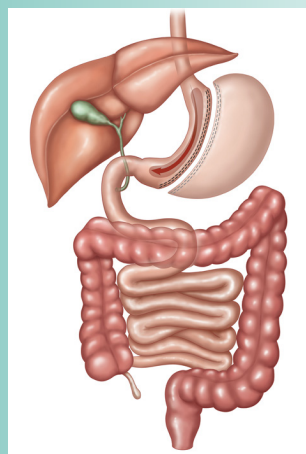
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