

FEATURING "IN GOOD HEALTH" FROM MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER

Monmouth

HEALTH & LIFE

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HAPPY AT HOME

- **FLOWER GIRL** SHE LOVES LAVENDER
- **DRESSING** (YOUR ROOMS) FOR SUCCESS
- **DON'T DO THAT** PROS' TIPS FOR GREAT DECORATING

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WHAT'S
COOKING?
in
Sea Girt

SURGERY RESTORES QUALITY OF LIFE

Stress incontinence and uterine prolapse can disrupt daily life — but minimally invasive surgery can help.



Debbie Clayton can make light of her medical challenges now, but there was nothing funny about the problems they had caused.

“I had plumbing issues,” says Clayton, 59, of Oceanport, with a laugh. Specifically, Clayton, an administrative assistant at the Visiting Nurse Association, had urinary stress incontinence. The condition grew progressively worse over the years, and by last fall, “the urgency became quite frequent throughout the day,” she recalls. “It was debilitating. I desperately needed to get to a restroom but was unable to move my body. Any movement caused embarrassment because I couldn’t control my bladder.”

She also suffered from uterine prolapse, in which the uterus sags through weakened pelvic floor muscles onto or into the vagina. “Gravity wasn’t helping things any,” she says. “It became a quality of life issue.” In October, her primary care doctor referred Clayton to a specialist—Annacecilia Peacher, M.D., a urogynecologist with RWJBH Medical Group—who discussed treatment options.

“Dr. Peacher was great,” Clayton says. “She explained everything to me and gave me detailed handouts on the surgical procedures to read. I had complete confidence in her.”

Dr. Peacher explained that



**Annacecilia Peacher, M.D.,
urogynecologist,
RWJBH Medical Group**

uterine prolapse is a common condition in which the muscles, ligaments and tendons of the pelvic floor become stretched, weakened or torn, allowing the uterus and sometimes other organs to slip through and into the vagina. This is typically a result of pregnancy and childbirth but also can result from aging or other injury.

They decided the best course of action was surgery. Testing determined that Clayton was a good candidate for a partial hysterectomy and bladder sling—"repairs so the bottom wouldn't fall out," Clayton says blithely. She had a supracervical hysterectomy, in which the woman's uterus, but not the cervix or ovaries, is removed. She also had procedures to tighten the support tissues that hold the abdominal organs in place. Finally, Dr. Peacher inserted a midurethral sling, a narrow piece of mesh that holds the urethra in place to correct leakage from bladder stress.

Clayton was able to have the procedures done using minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery. "Because of her active lifestyle and younger age, we wanted the most durable surgery with less risk for recurrence," Dr. Peacher says.

The surgery was performed Dec. 9, 2019. It took about four hours, Dr. Peacher recalls, and went smoothly. "I never had

surgery before, but it all went great," Clayton says. She spent one night in the hospital. After only a couple of days, she no longer needed the narcotic painkiller and controlled her pain with ibuprofen and acetaminophen. She was not allowed to lift anything more than 10 pounds for a month, but she was able to return to work part time on Dec. 26, and full time soon after the new year.

Clayton still experienced some urinary leakage after the surgery, which is not uncommon. Physical therapy is helping her strengthen the muscles that control the bladder. "That is going very well and improving the problem greatly," she says.

Like many women who have this type of surgery, Clayton only wishes she had done it sooner. "I feel more comfortable now," she says. "I just always thought things would get better, but they did not. If you have urgency issues, it is to your benefit to see a doctor."

"A lot of women think this problem is normal or don't want to talk about it," Dr. Peacher says. "It is important for them to know it can be managed and improve their day-to-day life. If you have urinary issues and have to wear a pad, are in the bathroom all the time, and it is hindering day-to-day activity, see somebody."

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—Annacelia Peacher, M.D.

MEET DR. PEACHER

Annacelia Peacher, M.D., is an RWJBH Medical Group urogynecologist in practice with Sandra Greco, M.D., at Urogynecology Specialists, West Long Branch. She specializes in female pelvic floor disorders, including pelvic organ prolapse, urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections, using minimally invasive surgical procedures.

She is a graduate of St. Mary's University, San Antonio, and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Medical School. She completed her residency for obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School. She also completed a fellowship at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery.

Dr. Peacher is board eligible with the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology for Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery. Her research interests include improving postoperative complications, studying the urinary microbiome and patient diversity.

A member of the American Urogynecologic Society and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dr. Peacher enjoys the outdoors in her spare time. "I love getting outside and playing on the beach with my three young children and husband," she says.

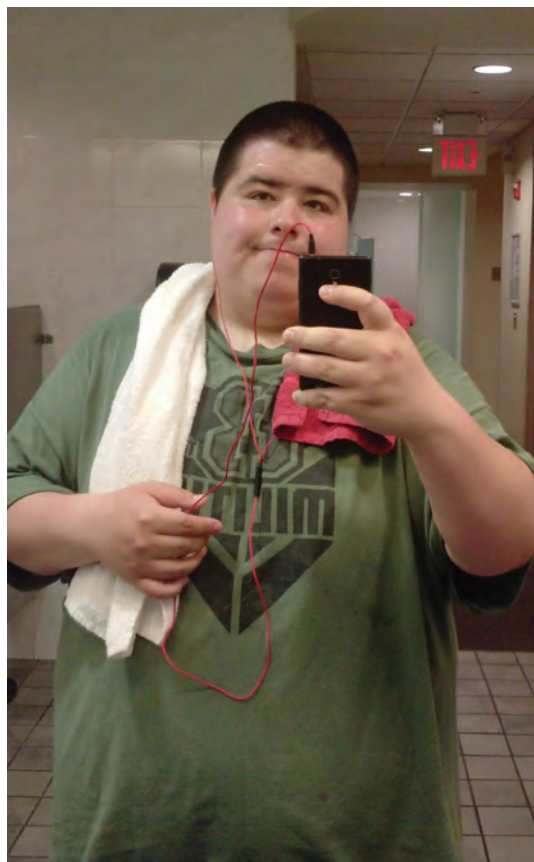


To make an appointment with Annacelia Peacher, M.D., at 223 Monmouth Rd., Ste. 1C in West Long Branch, or at 1 Rte. 70 W. in Lakewood, call 732.571.0972.

{ IN GOOD HEALTH }

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

After struggling with obesity, a 30-year-old Long Branch man turns to Monmouth Medical Center for the “tools” to change — and save — his life.



Jesus Galarza is not unlike any other New Jerseyan: He’s an active, fun-loving guy who enjoys a good laugh with friends as much as he appreciates shopping for nice clothing. But the 30-year-old Long Branch resident also isn’t ashamed to say that his life hasn’t always been filled with happiness; in fact, it was quite the opposite just five years ago.

Growing up, Galarza was always overweight. He tipped the scale between 270 and 280 pounds throughout high school, a weight he didn’t carry well on his 5’8” frame. “I always tried to eat healthy,” he says, “but it was hard when you have all the good stuff in front of you. I was a big fan of Chinese food.” Galarza continued to make poor dietary choices, and he ballooned to 375 pounds and was suffering from back and knee pain by the time he reached his mid-20s. That’s when, while attending a confer-

ence in 2015, he met former professional wrestler and current motivational speaker and yoga instructor Dallas Page, a Point Pleasant native.

“He told me, ‘Listen, if you don’t change your life and your eating habits now, you’re not going to make it to age 40 because your heart is not going to keep carrying your weight,’” Galarza recalls. “That was a big wake-up call.”

Galarza started exercising and shed nearly 40 pounds in just over three years, but he wasn’t convinced that his health was getting any better. “Nothing was really working,” he says. “When you’re big all of your life, you think all you have to do is exercise—but you don’t realize that controlling food intake is just as important.”

Friends started talking to Galarza about bariatric surgery, where medical profession-

als make physical changes to a patient’s digestive system. After conducting his own research, he reached out to Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) and met with bariatric surgeon Frank Borao, M.D., FACS, FASMBS, director of minimally invasive esophageal and gastric surgery. After reviewing his options with the staff, Galarza elected for sleeve gastrectomy, a procedure in which roughly 75 percent of the stomach is removed via minimally invasive surgery. The day before surgery, which took place last September, Galarza weighed 334 pounds.

“I was nervous and scared, but Dr. Borao always told me the truth, presented the facts and made me feel comfortable,” Galarza says. “I didn’t know the possible outcome, but he said I had a good chance of succeeding with this procedure.”

The Bariatric Surgery Center at MMC has



This page: Jesus Galarza lost 168 pounds since bariatric surgery last year. He weighed 166 pounds in September. Opposite page, from left: At his heaviest, Galarza weighed 375 pounds in 2015; he was down to 205 pounds five months after surgery; in June, he weighed 190 pounds.

been reaccredited as a Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP), a joint Quality Program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). MBSAQIP-accredited centers offer preoperative and postoperative care designed specifically for obese patients.

“Our outstanding quality of care, low complication rate and high level of surgical experience distinguish our bariatric surgery program,” says Dr. Borao.

According to Galarza, Dr. Borao reminded him that surgery was a “tool” for weight loss and health maintenance. To do “his part,” he

developed better eating habits such as reducing the amount of carbs and sugar in his diet and increasing his intake of vegetables and lean proteins like chicken and fish. Galarza also gets consistent exercise: He walks between 5 and 6 miles a day and stays on his feet all day as a member of the Long Branch public schools’ custodial staff.

“I’m constantly moving, and when you eat clean, you feel clean,” says Galarza, who today—about one year after bariatric surgery—is a svelte 166 pounds. “I love my lifestyle. I have energy now that I never had.

“I feel great and I fit into the clothes I always wanted to buy,” he adds. “I can’t thank Dr. Borao and his staff enough; they really saved my life.”

THE BEST IN BARIATRIC SURGERY

As a reaccredited Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP), the Bariatric Center at Monmouth Medical Center (MMC) has demonstrated a track record of exceptional patient outcomes in bariatric surgery. Monmouth Medical Center is in its 20th year of performing bariatric surgery and has once again received the designation for the maximum three-year term, reserved for applicants that exceed the requirements for full approval. To earn a Center of Excellence designation, MMC underwent a site inspection during which all aspects of the program’s surgical processes were examined closely and data on health outcomes was collected.

Recognized as a serious disease that compromises quality of life and increases the risk of death, morbid obesity is characterized by individuals having a body mass index (BMI) greater than 40, which equates to about 80 pounds overweight for a female and 100 pounds overweight for a male. Severe obesity also can lead to life-threatening diseases including diabetes, hypertension and pulmonary compromise.

“Surgeons reviewed by MBSAQIP must have performed enough successful cases to merit the designation,” says bariatric surgeon Frank Borao, M.D., FACS, FASMBS, director of minimally invasive esophageal and gastric surgery. “It is a comprehensive assessment and an honor to have our program recognized.”



To learn more about the bariatric surgery options offered at Monmouth Medical Center, or for a schedule of free new patient lectures, call 888.724.7123.

{ IN GOOD HEALTH }

SAFE MOMS AND BABIES

Monmouth's maternity staff delivers top-notch care — even during a pandemic.



The COVID crisis has taught us to deal with many new challenges: working and learning from home, wearing a mask in public and social distancing around others, for instance. But there is no practice or learning curve when it comes to having a newborn during a pandemic, particularly during the height of the crisis.

Having given birth twice within that past seven years, Middletown resident Kirsten Kendrick essentially knew what to expect while she was pregnant with her third child—that is until the coronavirus outbreak began in March. With a May delivery planned, Kendrick's baby would arrive at the peak of the crisis, which "terrified" her and her family.

"I sat in front of the TV watching the news," she recalls. "I didn't allow any visitors in my home. When my kids arrived home, I immediately stripped them of all their clothes and put them in the wash. I couldn't fathom the thought of contracting the virus and possibly passing it to my unborn child. I was worried not only of contracting the virus but also about having to potentially deliver my baby alone. I was completely paranoid."

Kendrick's concerns, of course, were understandable. Safety regulations at the time kept all family out of health care facility delivery rooms, and guests would not be permitted in patient rooms. Wearing a face mask at all times was also a concern. "I remember thinking how I was ever going to [deliver a baby] when you can't breathe half of the time," she says.

Because of the increased, albeit necessary, safeguards, Kendrick says she briefly considered a home birth but knew that option was "unrealistic." Plus, she had access to one of the best hospitals in the country, Monmouth Medical Center (MMC), which recently earned a spot on *Newsweek's* 2020 list of the Best Maternity Care Hospitals in the country. Kendrick ultimately gave birth to her "beautiful, chunky and healthy" baby girl Gemma Anne Bloom on May 7 at MMC.

"They are hands down the best team and brought some peace of mind during a high-stress time," says Kendrick, 28. She gives extra praise to Anthony Giovine, D.O., who not only delivered all three of her babies but delivered Kendrick as well.

The *Newsweek* honor is based on the 2019 Leapfrog Hospital Survey and recognizes facilities that have excelled in providing care to mothers, newborns and their families.

"This spring, MMC was awarded its 11th consecutive 'A' Hospital Safety Score rating by the Leapfrog Group, and we are honored to receive this additional Leapfrog recognition of our quality outcomes for maternity patients," says Eric Carney, MMC president and CEO. "As a high reliability organization, we understand that what matters most to our patients is safe, effective care and remain committed to the highest quality care and patient safety for mothers and babies."

"This will definitely be a birth I will never forget," Kendrick adds. "I am just so happy I have a healthy, happy baby at the end. The staff during my entire stay was safe and took all precautions needed to protect themselves and others from the spread of the virus. Although this wasn't an ideal situation... they really did a great job making it feel as 'normal' as possible."



Top: Mother Kirsten Kendrick with her three children, Gemma, Gia and Jaxon. Bottom: Dad Ean Bloom joins Gemma and Kirsten for a photo.



For more information on delivering at Monmouth Medical Center or taking their virtual tour or classes, contact Ana Pinto at 732.923.5024 or ana.pinto@rwjbh.org.