

# • Cosmetic surgery: Changing lives forever, for the better

**M**egan Marquis-Conner was proud to hop on a scale in fall 2002 and realize she had reached her goal of dropping 105 pounds.

But the weight loss, though done wisely through diet and exercise over 2 1/2 years, left her with another problem: lots of extra skin that no amount of exercise could erase.

"It was very bothersome for four years," says Marquis-Conner, now 27, a practice coordinator at Plastic & Hand Surgical Associates in South Portland.

"It was a constant battle to cover the excess skin," especially in her abdomen.

Also, because breast tissue is mostly fat, her weight loss left her with very little volume in her breasts.

Working for plastic surgeons, Marquis-Conner had witnessed a lot of "before-and-afters" and decided in June that it was her turn.

"I chose to proceed with an abdominoplasty, more commonly known as a tummy tuck, and to have breast augmentation (with saline implants) as well."



**Dr. David G. Fitz, left, and Dr. John A. Attwood are two of the seven surgeons on the staff at Plastic & Hand. Dr. Fitz knows the transformative effect that cosmetic surgery can have: A simple eyelid lift was enough to help a struggling middle-aged salesman feel more youthful and able to compete with his 30-something co-workers. (Merry Farnum photo)**

Having assisted with so many patients, Marquis-Conner knew exactly what she was getting into with the procedures, costs and recovery time. And knowing firsthand the kind of care she'd receive, she was entirely comfortable with her decision.

"The physicians here are just down to earth and very

caring," she says. "And the entire staff is wonderful."

"I'm very happy with the results," says Marquis-Conner, who is now a healthy and happy 145 pounds. "I have no more hanging skin, and I'm much more pleased with my general appearance, and I feel much more comfortable in a bathing suit."

She's even more of a valuable resource to the practice now, helping to educate patients who are considering these types of procedures.

Abdominoplasty or "tummy tuck" is a very popular procedure. The surgery is done at WADSC, Plastic & Hand's day surgery center, under a general anesthetic.

Not all patients require a tummy tuck to improve the contour of the abdomen... some may be better suited for liposuction. Liposuction is the most popular cosmetic surgery in the United States today and with good reason: It works well in the right patient. And more and more people are choosing these types of procedures.

"The number of cosmetic procedures has surged over the past five or 10 years in this country," says Dr. Thomas E. Vaughan, who has been with Plastic & Hand since 1999. "I think it's a cultural change, that it's just become more accepted in recent years. And more acceptable for people to talk about and ask their doctors about."



**Dr. Thomas E. Vaughan notes that cosmetic procedures have become more accepted in recent years. (Merry Farnum photo)**

With the equalizing effects of cable TV and the Internet, that's true even in New England, where people traditionally tend to be less focused on their looks than in, say, California, notes Dr. Richard C. Flaherty of Plastic

**See COSMETIC, Page 7**

**Plastic & Hand surgeons perform a range of cosmetic – or aesthetic, as it's sometimes called – surgeries that reshape the face and body and are designed to improve appearance, including:**

- **Nose surgery (rhinoplasty)**
- **Breast augmentation and breast lifts**
- **Eyelid surgery, brow lifts and face lifts**
- **Abdominoplasty (removal of excess skin and fat from the stomach)**
- **Liposuction**
- **Ear surgery**
- **Scar revision**
- **Laser surgery to smooth wrinkles, and correct acne scarring and pigmentation problems**

### COSMETIC

Continued from Page 6

& Hand.

“It’s a combination of things, but I think people in today’s society are just a little less conservative than they used to be – and more willing to spend money on themselves.”

With the growing demand, Plastic & Hand surgeons now spend a substantial part of their workweek handling cosmetic surgeries and treatments. Their extensive experience in all aspects of plastic surgery gives them a deep understanding of anatomy that serves them well in cosmetic surgery, asserts Vaughan.

Providing such a range of services makes the workday fun and challenging, all Plastic & Hand doctors agree.

“Each of us brings something new to the table and we all usually have a different approach,” says Vaughan, who enjoys cosmetic and breast reconstruction surgery.

“But one big thing we have in common is our philosophy

that the newest thing isn’t always best. We welcome new advances, but we all tend to be a little skeptical and don’t bring out things that haven’t been proven to be safe and reliable.”

Advancements that do pass that test and help doctors build on their skills and concepts are exciting. One such example that Dr. David G. Fitz is particularly keen on is “a short-scar face lift,” which as the name implies, produces a dramatically shorter scar.

“The modern-day face lift is so much better, in general, than 25 years ago,” adds Flaherty. “We can give people much longer-lasting results without an unnatural pull.”

Other popular surgeries these days include eyelid lifts, endoscopic browlifts, breast augmentation and lifts, and liposuction.

There’s more interest than ever, but not everyone who comes in for surgery should expect to have it. Plastic & Hand patients are carefully screened to be sure they’re medically stable and thoroughly understand



**Cosmetic surgery made a very positive difference in the life of Megan Marquis-Conner. Because she has worked for plastic surgeons, she had witnessed a lot of “before-and-afters” and decided in June that it was her turn. (Merry Farnum photo)**

what they’re considering having done. Some people have unrealistic expectations, some have a distorted body image and are obsessed with perceived defects, and others are motivated to undergo a procedure for unhealthy reasons or because of outside pressure.

“If we don’t think someone’s a good candidate,

we will turn them away,” explains White. “The biggest misconception is that surgery will make someone thinner – that a tummy tuck or liposuction will just solve the problem. We advise people to come see us for body contouring after the weight has been lost. And to their credit, some do just that, and then they have much better

results when they do come in.”

For good, qualified candidates who decide to have cosmetic surgery, the outcome can do wonders, and that makes a plastic surgeon’s job fun. Fitz offers two recent examples:

A simple eyelid lift was enough to help a struggling middle-aged salesman feel more youthful and able to compete with his 30-something co-workers.

And an attractive woman in her 40s was fed up with her flabby lower abdomen and sagging breasts caused mainly by having four babies in rapid succession years earlier. A tummy tuck and breast augmentation “just turned things around for her.”

“When you have a cosmetic procedure, your friends may not recognize exactly what you did,” says Fitz. “They’ll say things like, ‘Gee, you look great, but I can’t figure out what it is.’”

Only part of the credit for an improved look should be given to the surgery, he contends.

“I believe the other part is the change in confidence or some inside self-perception. For many people, cosmetic surgery gives a boost or lift that changes their outlook on life.”