

For one Laguna Beach couple, bariatric surgery proved to be **one of the best decisions** that they've ever made

# BARIATRIC SURGERY:

## A Case Study

During the past 20 years there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States. Some 67 percent of the people in this country are overweight, with more than 33 percent obese. This excessive weight poses a greater risk for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and stroke, and certain forms of cancer. A variety of factors contribute to obesity, but the most general factors are an increased consumption of foods high in saturated fat and sugars, and reduced physical activity.

Bariatrics is the branch of medicine that specializes in the treatment of obesity. South Coast Medical Center has on staff one of the leading bariatric surgeons in the country, Brian Quebbemann, M.D., FACS.

"I have performed minimally invasive bariatric surgery on patients ranging from 200 pounds to well over 600 pounds safely and with great results," said Dr. Quebbemann. "It is my goal to continue providing the safest and most successful methods of weight control to the community."

Dr. Quebbemann, on staff at SCMC since 2003, is the founder of The N.E.W. Program, a top-rated weight-loss program that has helped over 2,000 patients reach their desired weight loss.



*Left: Matthew and Karen Smith before bariatric surgery*

*Above: The Smiths after bariatric surgery*

### A COUPLE'S STORY

Just ask Matthew and Karen Smith of Laguna Beach. In November 2006, Matthew and Karen both had gastric bypass surgery and their lives have never been the same. Prior to his surgery, the 6-foot-4-inch Matthew, 54, tipped the scales at 417 pounds. Suffering from sleep apnea, diabetes, sore bones and an enlarged heart, his cardiologist urged him to undergo bariatric surgery. Matthew, however, was reluctant. "I was against having the surgery," he says. "I figured if I could just get a handle on it, I could lose the weight on my own."

But Matthew's physician told him he didn't have much of a choice. "My doctor said, 'Matthew, you may not make it to Christmas. You don't have a lot of time to make this decision.'"

Meanwhile, Karen Smith, 57, stands at 5 feet tall and weighed 236 pounds. "Years back I had a hysterectomy," says Karen. Her recovery from that surgery was slow and it led to a steady increase in her weight. "I also love to eat," she continues. "After I started putting on the pounds, it just became easier to overeat."

# MEET THE DOCTORS

## BRIAN B. QUEBBEMANN, M.D., FACS

Dr. Quebbemann is one of America's top experts in minimally invasive bariatric surgery. He performs every weight-loss surgery using minimally invasive, laparoscopic techniques. He has practiced surgery in Newport Beach since 1997 and is surgical director of The N.E.W. Program. Dr. Quebbemann's training includes medical school at the University of Minnesota and residency training in general surgery, bariatric surgery and laparoscopy at the University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine.



## JUSTIN BRAVERMAN, M.D.

Dr. Braverman is a member of the American Medical Association and the American College of Surgeons. He earned his master's degree in science and his medical degree from Finch University of Health Sciences at The Chicago Medical School. Dr. Braverman coordinates clinical management for the Lap-Band program and is one of the few surgeons in California with expertise in the new technique of incisionless surgery.



## A SOLUTION

The Smiths finally decided they were ready to proceed. They were referred to a number of bariatric surgeons, but the Smiths didn't feel comfortable with any of them.

Everything changed, though, when Matthew and Karen met Dr. Quebbemann and his partner, Justin Braverman, M.D. They immediately liked Dr. Quebbemann's very direct style. "Dr. Quebbemann is quite efficient with his words," says Matthew. "One of the first things he said was, 'You people have a problem. You think you are here just to lose weight. I will help you accomplish that, but what I also intend to do is help you change your lifestyle—so you will have optimal health, look good in clothes and be able to play with your grandchildren.'"

Dr. Quebbemann had a good reason for being confident. In all the years he's been practicing, he has a safety record that is unmatched in the field.

Matthew and Karen also responded to Dr. Braverman's congenial personality. He really connected with the Smiths on an emotional level. "When the Smiths first came to The N.E.W. Program, I knew they were fed up with yo-yo diets and weight loss pills. Nothing seemed to work for them. Matt had significant illnesses affecting his health such as diabetes, high blood pressure and out-of-control cholesterol. Karen could no longer live the life she wanted to live, and didn't enjoy things the way she used to before the weight came on."

## THE SURGERIES

On Nov. 15, 2006, Karen Smith had her surgery. "My recovery time was miniscule. I had one overnight stay at South Coast Medical Center—the most beautiful, peaceful place I can think of to recover. The next day I left the hospital and I was out walking my dogs."

Dr. Quebbemann insisted that Karen not be sedentary. "He told me I needed to stay active to help with the recovery, to get up and get out of the house," Karen says. She did just that, making it a point to go on walks on a daily basis. Karen's recovery was so minor that she only needed over-the-counter pain medications to soothe her soreness. Karen's quick recovery made it even easier for Matthew to proceed with his surgery two weeks later.

On Nov. 28, Matthew had his surgery. His recovery was just as smooth as Karen's. The day after his procedure, he was sore, but Matthew already felt like a new man.

## NEW LIVES

After about two weeks, both Karen's and Matthew's clothes were now too big for them. Over the next several months they steadily lost weight, and today Matthew weighs 247 pounds and Karen weighs 110 pounds.

Their children and grandchildren are thrilled with the "new" Matthew and Karen. "When our daughter first saw my wife, she was ecstatic. She said, 'You look like my old mom again.'" The children, who knew of the potential dangers of Matthew's poor health, were relieved. "I saw some tears," says Matthew, who learned just how afraid his children had been for him.

Dr. Quebbemann and Dr. Braverman like to follow up from time to time to see how their

patients are doing. The physicians, both of them board-certified, have been pleased with the Smiths' continued progress. "Since safely undergoing bariatric surgery, both Matt and Karen have each lost well over 100 pounds, and their health has dramatically improved," says Dr. Braverman. "Matt is off his blood pressure and diabetic medications. They both can exercise and travel again, and I see the happiness on their faces. For me, that is what bariatric surgery is all about—giving a patient a second chance at life."

Do the Smiths have any regrets about their surgery? "I would do this again in a heartbeat if I could," says Karen. "This was absolutely the best money we've ever spent. Surgery involves trust and we trusted Dr. Quebbemann and Dr. Braverman completely and they could not have performed the surgeries better. Plus, I am just so happy ... I feel like a girl again."

Matthew and Karen think the world of SCMC, in addition to Dr. Quebbemann and Dr. Braverman. "I was a patient at the hospital years before, for a hip replacement operation," Matthew says. "Both times I've been at SCMC, I received the best care possible. It has a 'home-town' feeling, but with 'big town' professionals." Adds Karen, "When you are a patient at South Coast Medical Center, you don't feel as though you are a number. You feel as though there are no other patients in the world."

Matthew and Karen, who live on Top of the World in Laguna Beach, truly feel they are, indeed, on top of the world. ✱

## THE N.E.W. PROGRAM

The N.E.W. Program is unique in its approach because it is the only program that has a truly multidisciplinary team working together in one place.

The four key components for The N.E.W. Program's success include: Patient education; a thorough medical evaluation to ensure patient safety; state-of-the-art, minimally invasive bariatric surgery, providing the least postoperative pain and the fastest patient recovery; and long-term follow-up.

For more information on The N.E.W. Program, call **949-722-7662** or call SCMC's Bariatric Program Coordinator at **949-499-7569**.

