

Virginia woman likes new 'old look' after cosmetic surgery

by DARLENE SCHAEFFER

Living in the western side of Virginia, 43-year-old Ann Parker has access to an array of renowned medical professionals in Roanoke, Charlottesville and Richmond. But when she selected a hospital and doctor for elective plastic surgery, she decided a nearly four-hour drive to Presbyterian Hospital Huntersville and Stillwater Plastic Surgery better suited her interests.

Parker says she was drawn by the reputation of Dr. Peter Capizzi, Stillwater's private practitioner. Capizzi's reputation extends well beyond Mecklenburg County and even North Carolina. "In terms of a surgeon, I don't think you can do better than Dr. Capizzi," she says. "He's like a sculptor. I truly believe there's an art to medicine. It's not just a science."

Most of his patients are from the immediate area, but Capizzi says he has performed procedures on patients from all over the Southeast. "It's not uncommon for me to work on patients from West Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia or Virginia," he adds.

Capizzi says his philosophy about patient care and customer service helped establish his name. Before Stillwater, Capizzi was involved in a group practice. With cosmetic surgery, Capizzi said he and his staff believe in slowing down the process. "We strive to provide patients with excellent experiences overall."

In February, Capizzi performed a breast augmentation and a circumferential body lift on Parker. Parker says this was not her first elective plastic surgery. Twenty years ago, she had silicone implants put in by a physician in Virginia; however, one eventually deflated. In addition, Parker admits her breasts nev-

er looked as natural as she would have liked. She knew at some point, she wanted a second augmentation to improve the safety of her implants, as well as to regain a more natural appearance. Her road to a new look was a lengthy journey.

Positive experience

Parker began consulting with Capizzi and his staff at Stillwater Plastic Surgery in Birkdale Village nearly two years ago. Not only did she want to improve a prior augmentation, but she wanted to address the toll two pregnancies took on her lower body. Fourteen years ago, Parker gained more than 70 pounds while pregnant with twins. The birth of her son resulted in a 50-pound weight gain. Although she lost the weight, she wasn't able to restore her body to the way it had been, and she noticed that some things had sagged and shifted. "There was less air in the balloon, but it was not the same balloon as it was before," says Parker.

She considered surgery to correct what she deemed problem areas, including her rear end and upper thighs.

If plastic surgery were an option, she knew she wanted Stillwater and Capizzi to do it. She wrestled with the idea for



COURTESY STILLWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

See *Cosmetic*/page 7

Dr. Peter Capizzi of Stillwater Plastic Surgery has a regional reputation for excellent care.

Cosmetic/From page 6

months, and then, after marital troubles and an eventual divorce, she knew this was what she needed to do to get back on her feet. "My only regret is I didn't do it sooner," says Parker.

Parker raves about the results. "I look proportioned," she says. "For my age, I look phenomenal."

She says the experience, which included four hours of surgery and an overnight stay at PHH, was just as good.

While a friend drove her to and from the hospital, Parker underwent the surgery alone. "I was there on my own, and I never felt uncomfortable or abandoned," she says. "All of the nurses were good to me. Everything was good. Even the food was good."

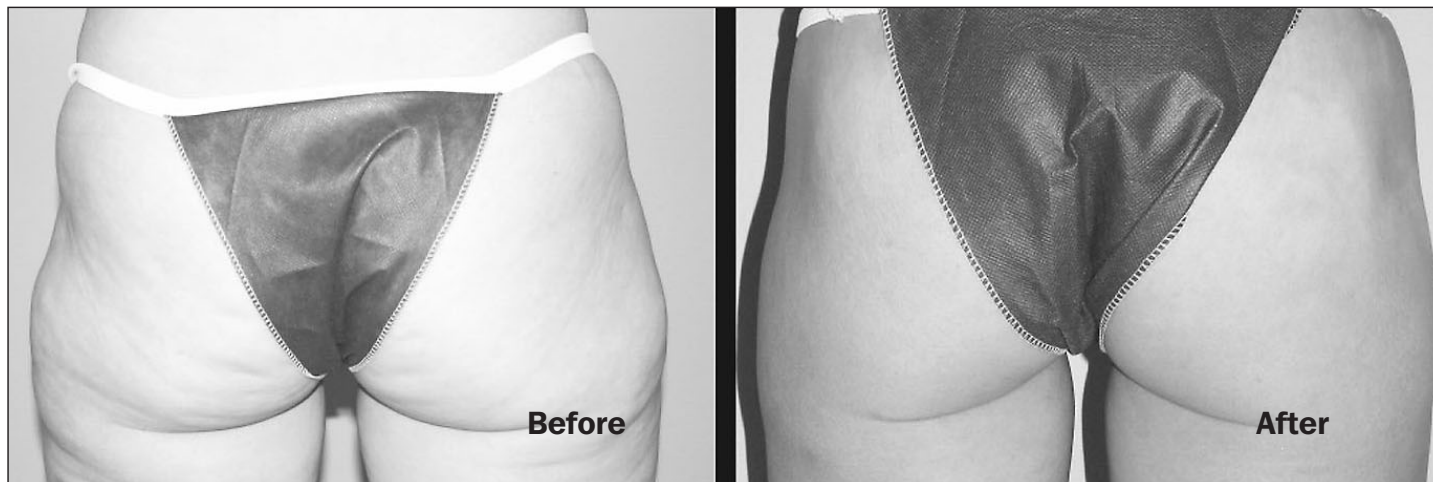
She adds that between her initial consultations at Capizzi's office to her discharge from Presbyterian Hospital Huntersville, everything, from procedures to costs, was thoroughly explained to her. "It could not have been easier," she says.

Even recovery time was easier than she imagined. With her augmentation 20 years ago, Parker suffered from painful swelling and bruising. That was not the case this time. She did have some significant discomfort with her body lift, but this subsided within a week or two.

Capizzi says Parker's surgical experiences are typical of what most of his patients experience. Most single procedures do not even require an overnight stay. Capizzi calls patients in the evening for post-surgical follow-up, and they usually answer the phone themselves.

For most, recovery involves some swelling the following week and soreness within the immediate days following surgery. The pain and discomfort can usually be relieved with non-steroidal, non-narcotic medications such as Celebrex or ibuprofen. Often patients, if willing, can go back to work within 48 hours.

In more extensive surgeries involving multiple procedures, such as Parker's, an overnight stay is necessary. Recovery is also slight-



COURTESY STILLWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

Dr. Peter Capizzi helped Ann Parker regain some of the old shape.

ly longer. But Capizzi says Parker's account of a week of real recovery time is accurate.

Although complications are rare and success rates are high, Capizzi reminds patients that plastic surgery procedures, such as breast augmentations, body contouring and lifting, and liposuction are, in fact, major surgeries.

"It's serious, because it is surgery," he says. "It's important to marry the person and the procedure."

Seeking a natural look

All of Capizzi's procedures require extensive consultations. He and his staff take time to assess whether or not certain procedures are appropriate for certain patients. "We easily turn down 10-15 percent of people who come to us," says Capizzi. People with unrealistic expectations, such as someone who wants to correct obesity with liposuction, may not be good candidates for plastic surgery. According to Capizzi, because clotting is a risk with liposuction,

Capizzi says his philosophy about patient care and customer service helped establish his name. Before Stillwater, Capizzi was involved in a group practice. With cosmetic surgery, Capizzi said he and his staff believe in slowing down the process. "We strive to provide patients with excellent experiences overall."

people who are about 10 pounds overweight are better candidates for such a procedure.

While plastic surgery was once viewed as a celebrity indulgence, Capizzi says medical advances have made procedures more affordable and recovery time shorter for those with more moderate lifestyles. Many of his patients, he says, are "the moms across the street that you wouldn't think have it." Ninety-

nine percent of his patients are women, many who, like Parker, cannot seem to get back their pre-pregnancy physique.

According to Capizzi, most of his patients want a natural look, and because many have children, they do not want surgery to hinder an active lifestyle.

The time and money her procedures required have proven worthwhile for Parker.

"It's major surgery, but it's well worth it," says Parker. "It makes a noticeable difference in my life."

Parker says that she, like many women, has always felt self-con-

scious about her appearance. "I've always felt pear-shaped and not on my game," she says. "The blackest day of the year was trying on a new swimsuit."

Going through a divorce further degraded her feelings of self-worth. "For nine months, things were pretty gray," she says. "This (whole experience) gave me back my confidence." Now Parker says pool and beach season has given her a new sense of self-assurance and even a feeling of excitement at "showing off" her new self. After being out of the dating season for more than two decades, Parker says her new figure gives her the confidence to re-enter that often-daunting world.

Not only has her new body left her feeling proud and ready to experience a renewed life, but her "phenomenal experience" with Presbyterian and Stillwater Plastic Surgery keeps her beaming. She feels she was well cared for throughout the entire experience. "If I ever have anything else done, I will be coming to the Charlotte/Huntersville area," she says, adding she would recommend plastic surgery under the care of Capizzi and Presbyterian Hospital Huntersville to anyone.

In fact, Capizzi's clientele may soon extend beyond the Southeast and the I-77 corridor. "My mother is considering having work done, and she will fly across the nation to meet with Dr. Capizzi when she finally decides to do so," says Parker.