

# Couple finds new life through surgery, personal fitness

By Brandon Michea  
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Michelle Goodwin had enough. After gaining a large amount of weight over a short period of time to reach 259 pounds, her health problems had begun to add up.

"I finally just got sick of it," she said. "I knew something needed to be done and I started looking into my options."

Among her research she found the Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass, a procedure in which a small stomach pouch is created to restrict food intake and a section of the small intestine is attached to the pouch to allow food to bypass the lower stomach, the duodenum, and the first portion of the jejunum. This bypass reduces the amount of calories and nutrients the body absorbs. Interested in the procedure, Michelle made an appointment to meet with Dr. Dennis C. Smith of Advanced Obesity Surgery in Woodstock to discuss the potential of having the surgery.

She was not alone in her quest for a healthier life, however, as her husband, Jeff, who was nearing 500 pounds, asked her to make an appointment with Dr. Smith for him as well. And together, the couple decided the procedure was their best option.

"We had tried all the quick fix solutions from Richard Simmons to Herbal Life," said Michelle, "but they just didn't sustain."

To prepare for the procedure, Dr. Smith placed the couple on 12-week supervised diet to make sure they could stay with a diet, as well as improve the operating conditions.

"It's good for patients to lose weight before hand because it allows for more room to operate, which betters the chance for optimum results," he said.

Along with taking Xenical, a fat blocker, Jeff was limited to 2,400 calories a day, while Michelle was allowed just 1,200 calories a day, with the couple dropping 34 and 11 pounds, respectively, over the 12-week period.

But while they awaited their surgery date, Jeff and Michelle decided the procedure and a new eating lifestyle would not be enough.

"We wanted the surgery to be a tool for us, not a crutch," said Jeff. "So we started interviewing personal trainers in the area."

Unfortunately, the couple was not comfortable with most of the trainers they were meeting.

"The first guy wanted us to cancel our surgeries," said Jeff, recalling all the pre-operation tests he and his wife had already endured. "He told us he could make us lose the weight just working out with him."

The Goodwin's experience with personal trainers, however, got better once they met with Paul Feldman, owner of BodyDesign Personal Training studios in Woodstock,

Marietta and Kennesaw—designed for personal one-on-one training.

"He had already worked with another client that had the same type of procedure we were going to have so he knew what we wanted to accomplish," said Jeff of Mr. Feldman.

"Jeff hadn't worked out since high school and I had never worked out," said Michelle. "And Paul was going to give us the one-on-one attention we felt we wanted. We also liked the smaller, more personal atmosphere of BodyDesign over the big gyms."

Dr. Smith agreed with the Goodwin's decision on a personal training program.

"Exercise is recommended after the surgery," he said. "It raises the metabolism and the body will fend to preserve muscle and take the fat. The body will also take calcium out of the bones and the exercise will keep the bone strength up."

## SURGERY & A NEW LIFESTYLE

Following a four hour surgery for Jeff and a 3 1/2 hour surgery for Michelle, the couple had a three day stay in the hospital before returning home and starting a diet of protein drinks and water for four weeks.

Two weeks after the operations, they began their programs of personalized, hour-long weight training workout sessions followed by 30 minutes of cardio training three days a week with Mr. Feldman.

Making sure he was on the right track, Mr. Feldman joined the Goodwins for their first month's check-up with Dr. Smith.

"We were very impressed by that," said Jeff. "Paul just wanted to make sure he was on the same page with what needed to be done."

After the first month, Jeff and Michelle were able to once again start eating, in-taking two ounces of healthier foods several times throughout the day.

"You really don't have a choice in how much you eat or staying away from sugars and fats because it will make you sick if you overdue it or eat the wrong things," said Michelle. "It forces you to eat right."

And while both Jeff and Michelle admit the eating habits, which included plenty of protein, water and salads, were tough at first, they got easier over time.

"I really had a hard time for about the first two months, especially when I saw pizza commercials and such on TV," said Jeff. "You start to have some doubts on whether you made the right choice or not. But after those first couple of months, I knew we made the right decision."

Gradually, the Goodwins were able to introduce beef back into their diet to go along with chicken and turkey, all the while being monitored by Dr. Smith through regular check-ups.

"We try to educate our patients on the importance of their diet," said

Smith. "They need to make sure they are getting enough vitamins, proteins and nutrients."

The workouts, meanwhile, were achieving just what the Goodwins had hoped.

"They've really helped increase our weight loss," said Michelle. "And they've helped us to tone up, which is big because we don't want to have a bunch of skin surgery (surgery to remove excess skin after 18 months is part of the procedure)."

"People may think that less food equals less energy," said Jeff. "But that's not the case."

"You are still going to have a down day every now and then, but because of the working out and weight loss, our energy output has increased two-fold."

Six months removed from the operation, Jeff lost 159 pounds and 51 inches, while Michelle slimmed down 80 pounds and 34 inches, allowing them both to enjoy some of the simple things in life again.

"Before, we really didn't get out much," said Jeff. "When you are overweight like we were, society looks at you differently. If we went out to eat, we had to sit at tables in the middle of the restaurant because we couldn't fit in the booths and people would always stare and talk about us."

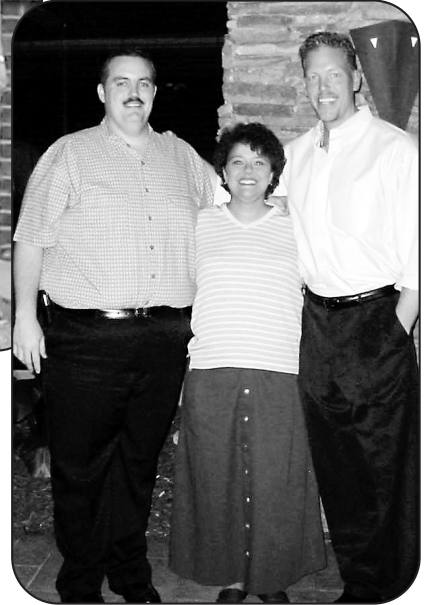
"Now, we can fit in the booths again."

Continuing the revised lifestyle, Jeff hopes to drop another 115 pounds and fall within the 210-220 range, while Michelle is aiming to lose 50 more pounds and once again fit in a size eight, but not just for their own looks or health.

"Our biggest goal is within a year or so, trying to have a baby," said Michelle. "We've tried for seven or



## Before & After



With Roux-en-Y Gastric bypasses through Dr. Dennis Smith of Advanced Obesity Surgery in Woodstock and a personal training program with Paul Feldman, owner of Body Design Fitness in Woodstock, Jeff and Michelle Goodwin lost a combined 239 pounds and 85 inches in six months.

Contributed Photos

eight years but weren't successful and thought the weight might have something to do with it. In a year, if we still can't have one, we'll look into adopting."

Also over the next year, the Goodwins will return to the doctor for check-ups and blood work every three months and then go on a yearly bases.

Now, along with their weight-loss success, Jeff and Michelle look back on the process and smile, especially when thinking of the help they received from Mr. Feldman and his

fellow personal trainers.

"They've been awesome," said Michelle. "They told us when we first walked in there that we had come to the right place and we had. The support they've given us throughout has really helped make this all possible."

BodyDesign Personal Training has three locations in north Metro-Atlanta—Woodstock on Towne Lake Parkway, Marietta on Sandy Plains Road and Kennesaw on Cherokee Street. For more information, visit [www.bodydesigntraining.com](http://www.bodydesigntraining.com) or call 770-980-9888.

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