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On the Brink of Death, Skilled Cardiac Intervention Saves Bernie Woman's Life

AUGUST 07TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Inoperable is Not Impossible

On the Brink of Death, Skilled Cardiac Intervention Saves Bernie Woman's Life

"We knew it would be a difficult surgery, but we had to try." - Joyce Causey

When SoutheastHEALTH Board Certified Cardiothoracic surgeon Paul D. Robison, MD, MMM, CPE, FACS, FACC, FACCP, was seven years old, his brother, 12, died of sudden cardiac arrest. Years later, that unspeakable tragedy turned into hope for thousands of patients with critical cardiac and vascular issues.

"After we lost Mark, I never wanted to be anything other than a cardiothoracic surgeon," Dr. Robison says. And for that Joyce Causey is eternally grateful. Joyce, one of the legion of patients whose life has been saved by Dr. Robison, had been turned down for heart surgery by two metropolitan medical centers. "Her risk was deemed to be too high," he says. "They were reluctant to take on that risk. Sometimes it's necessary to move forward without fear."

A History of Cardiac Disease

Joyce, 59, was only 30 when she began feeling like her heart was skipping beats. She was, her doctor told her, "too young to have heart disease." Dr. Robison is quick to debunk that theory. "Anyone, at any age, can have heart disease. I've operated on patients as young as a newborn weighing less than a pound and I've been on a heart transplant team for a 19-year-old patient."

Over the years, Joyce continued to experience cardiac problems. She continued working as a registered nurse, eventually moving from Nashville, TN, to Bernie, MO, where her husband Rusty and his cousin farm acres of cotton and beans, southeast Missouri staples. Joyce's medical problems continued to mount. She successfully battled rectal cancer and recovered from a fall that resulted in spinal stenosis that required neck surgery.

She ultimately underwent complete pericardial stripping via median sternotomy in 2015. During the procedure, a portion or all of the pericardium is removed. The pericardium is a double-walled membrane sac that surrounds the heart. When performing properly, there is a small amount of fluid that lubricates the heart during its normal pumping movements within the pericardium. She also underwent placement of a right coronary artery stent. For a while, things were better, Joyce says.

In November 2018, the Causeys' world came crashing down when Joyce suffered life-threatening flash pulmonary edema, a condition caused by excess fluid in the lungs that, in most cases, is related to heart problems. "I was struggling to breathe, literally wheezing and gasping for breath." Rusty rushed Joyce to nearby Southeast Health Center of Stoddard County in Dexter where, after initial stabilization, she was taken to Southeast Hospital in Cape Girardeau.

'She Was Dying'

After an emergency cardiac catheterization performed by Board Certified SoutheastHEALTH Cardiologist David Law, MD, Joyce was referred to Dr. Robison.

"She was dying. Mrs. Causey had critical coronary disease. Heart failure and a blocked left main coronary artery caused edema in her lungs. She also had restenosis from previous stents, a leaky aortic valve, a leaky mitral valve, a leaky tricuspid valve and pulmonary hypertension. She had to have heart surgery to save her life." - Dr. Paul Robison

"Dr. Robison told us that inoperable is not impossible," Joyce recalls. Her husband adds that "Dr. Robison was forthcoming and explained everything. He tells it to you like it is. We knew it would be a difficult surgery, but we had to try."

Fortunately for the Causeys, Dr. Robison is one of handful of cardiothoracic surgeons in this region of the country trained to perform multi-valve, complex heart reconstruction. His areas of expertise number more than 40 and include some of the most challenging surgical procedures in the Midwest. He also is Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis.

Joyce's surgery resulted in aortic and mitral valve replacements, tricuspid valve repair and three bypasses. She also underwent an emergency fiberoptic bronchoscopy right after surgery to remove fluid from her lungs which, Dr. Robison says, "were not light and fluffy like they should be, but heavy, almost like liver. It took two weeks to completely clear fluid out of her lungs."

Rusty sat by Joyce's bedside and never left, Dr. Robison notes. "He had a clear understanding of what was going on and was well aware of her struggle. Family support like Mr. Causey's is crucial to a good and lasting outcome."

Joyce's heart had been sick for over 20 years, Dr. Robison says. "She is slowly recovering her health. It will take a while, but her prognosis is good. Mrs. Causey's future is largely now in her hands with healthy lifestyle choices, cardiac rehab and exercise."

On the Road to Recovery

Joyce Causey coming from the brink of death back to a life she enjoys living is amazing, Joyce adds. A cardiac echo done at the end of February with Dr. Law showed all three valves working perfectly, normal ventricular size and function, a normal sinus rhythm and a normal EKG. "From my point of view it doesn't get better than normal," Dr. Robison observes.

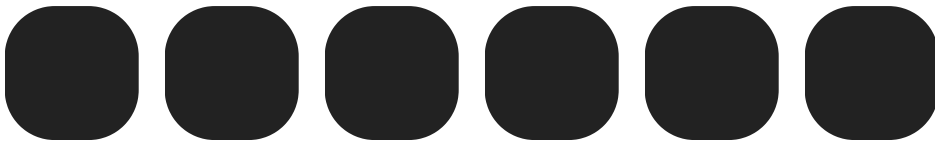
Joyce is continuing cardiac rehab at Southeast Health of Stoddard County. "Mrs. Causey is making great improvements," says Jamie Walls-Williams, RN, BSN. "When she started she was only able to exercise a total of four minutes on four different machines. She has now built up endurance and is doing eight minutes on four machines. She is well on her way to regaining her strength and stamina. I have full confidence that Joyce will be walking without a cane and living a better quality of life than before surgery."

"I play it day by day," Joyce says. Life is too short to let anything bring you down." As for Dr. Robison? "He's my angel"

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Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon Joins SoutheastHEALTH Medical Staff

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Matthew Baker, MD, Orthopedic Surgery, has joined the Medical Staff at Southeast Hospital. He is affiliated with Southeast Orthopedics and Sports Medicine. Dr. Baker comes to SoutheastHEALTH with expertise in shoulder and elbow surgery.

Dr. Baker earned his MD degree from the University of Missouri – Kansas City, where he also completed his residency. He completed a fellowship with the Division of Shoulder and Elbow Surgery at Johns Hopkins Department of Orthopaedic Surgery in Baltimore, MD. He is certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.

“I enjoy practicing orthopedics because I appreciate active people,” Dr. Baker says. “I want to help people who are injured return to being active. I also enjoy seeing patients accomplish goals. In orthopedic surgery, each case is unique and challenging.”

Prior to joining SoutheastHEALTH, Dr. Baker was affiliated with Mercy Health System based in St. Louis.

SoutheastHEALTH’s collaboration with Washington University’s Division of Orthopaedic Surgery affords patients access to complete care and the nation’s best clinical trials. At Southeast Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, patients receive comprehensive care that’s unparalleled in this region. Cape Catfish players are under that umbrella of care this summer. Southeast Orthopedics and Sports Medicine has been named official team physicians for the Prospect League team.

About SoutheastHEALTH

At SoutheastHEALTH, the region's premier healthcare system in southeast Missouri, our patients receive excellent care of the highest clinical quality, close to home. Within our network are more than 50 care locations in 12 communities, including hospitals, primary

and specialty care clinics representing over 30 clinical specialties and extending care for patients in a four-state area. Learn more at SEhealth.org.

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SoutheastHEALTH Honored for Marketing Excellence

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Thirteen SoutheastHEALTH marketing projects received statewide recognition at the recent Show Me Excellence Awards held recently in Branson, Mo.

Southeast won first place for five marketing efforts:

1. “Cancer Journey,” outdoor advertising

2. Family Cancer Risk public seminar, direct mail
3. “Mammos & a Makeover” open house at the Breast Care and Diagnostic Center, direct mail
4. Annual report video
5. “Heart Smart” campaign.

Second place honors went to Healthier Look magazine, “The Hope Edition;” “Cancer Journey” television ad; an open house showcasing the new Emergency Department and Behavioral Health Unit at Southeast Health of Stoddard County; and “Embrace the Change” public seminar, direct mail.

Third place recognition went to “AEDs Save Lives,” highlighting the work of the SoutheastHEALTH Foundation in providing these devices to community and civic groups; 2018 Employee Engagement Campaign; Power of Women expo booth and video; and a physician recruitment video.

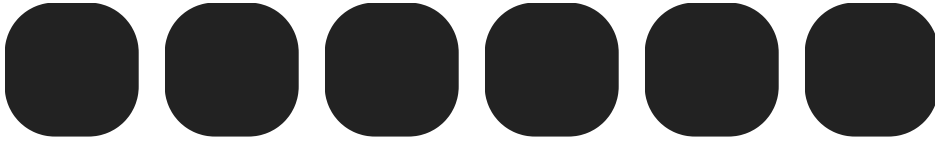
The Show Me Excellence Awards, presented annually by the Missouri Association for Healthcare Public Relations and Marketing (MAHPRM), recognize high achievement and quality in advertising, marketing and public relations projects produced by hospitals and healthcare systems throughout the state. A statewide panel of public relations and marketing professionals judged the 147 entries in this year’s competition.

The awards competition was established by MAHPRM in 1981 and is the only Missouri competition dedicated to hospital and healthcare public relations and communications efforts. With 22 categories, the competition includes projects in media relations, advertising, publications, writing, photography, marketing and public relations.

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Katherine Jones - Grady, DO, Joins SoutheastHEALTH

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Katherine Jones - Grady, DO, has joined the Medical Staff at Southeast Hospital. She is affiliated with Southeast Obstetrics and Gynecology at Women First. Dr. Jones – Grady comes to SoutheastHEALTH with expertise in minimally invasive surgical procedures.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology from Washington University, St. Louis.

Dr. Jones – Grady earned her DO degree from A.T. Still University, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, MO.

She completed a residency at Community Health of South Florida in Miami and The Medical Center, Navicent Health, Macon, GA.

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SoutheastHEALTH Offers Pediatric Services in Sikeston

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Meagan Ward has joined SoutheastHEALTH as a provider of pediatric services in collaboration with SoutheastHEALTH pediatrician Chelsea Grigery, MD. Ward, an advanced practice registered nurse, is based at Southeast’s Sikeston Clinic.

SoutheastHEALTH Chief Operating Officer Maria Sudak, DHA, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, says that with this newest clinic location, “SoutheastHEALTH will offer excellent care in a location convenient to the growing number of First Option clients in the Sikeston area. First Option is a health plan established by SoutheastHEALTH to provide self-insured employers of all sizes a cost savings health benefit solution. Meagan comes to SoutheastHEALTH with an exceptional background of caring for children of all ages.”

Ward holds a Master of Science in Nursing, prepared as a Family Nurse Practitioner, from Walden University in Minneapolis, MN. She has 18 years of experience working with pediatrics in direct nursing care and 10 years of experience working as a newborn nurse in direct patient care, both in a Newborn Nursery and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Ward also holds SAFE-CARE provider certification through Missouri KidsFirst, a program that maintains a coordinated medical response to child abuse and neglect in Missouri. She has been trained by board certified child abuse pediatricians and can perform forensic evaluations and comprehensive medical care for children who may have suffered physical or sexual abuse.

Her professional affiliations include the International Association of Forensic Nurses, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and Advanced Practice Nurses of the Ozarks.

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