

Stories from surgery

'It looks that good'

Christa Bragg isn't shy about talking about her breast augmentation, or the cancer that preceded it.

Talking about her surgeries freely has led her to a surprising discovery.

"You would not believe the women out there that have not had reconstructive surgery done" after mastectomies, said Bragg, a 35-year-old veterinarian from Ozark, Ala.

Every time she meets someone who could

benefit from the reconstructive work she had done, she encourages her to consider plastic surgery.

"There's a lot of issues — not just appearance, but for balance. There are a lot of reasons to have it done."

Now cancer-free, Bragg couldn't be happier with her results.

"If I didn't have the scar across from where my mastectomy was, you'd never know I had it," she said. "It looks that good."

'He's not a doctor, he's an artist'

Brenda Patin is a mother of two and grandmother of three.

She likes to stay fit.

And this Destin resident is reveling in the results of her recent facelift, saying that people look at her differently now.

"He's not a doctor, he's an artist," she said of Dr. Burden.

Patin, a self-described beach bum, said she just wanted to look better and figured the time was right.

But she never expected to feel so overwhelmingly positive about the results. Now, this 53-year-old said she feels 39.

"I'm gonna stay young," she said. "I'm going to live to be 100."

'The frosting on the cake'

For Steven Mustain, the life-changing surgery was the gastric bypass that brought his body mass index down from a 45 to a 21, his weight from 340 pounds to a svelte 170.

The \$7,000 abdominoplasty — tummy tuck — he had two years later was just "the frosting on the cake."

"You can't tone that skin up. You can't run it off. It's there," said Mustain, a Pensacola resident.

"The only way to rid yourself of it is to have somebody remove it."

His incision was from one hip to the other and required

a few weeks of sick leave, but it was nothing he couldn't get through without a little pain medication.

"I feel comfortable with the results. I'm happy with the outcome," Mustain said, adding he has come to the end of a long road.

"We always say, 'Oh, I'd do it over again,' but hopefully I'll never have to do this one again."



Special to the Daily News

Steven Mustain (above) lost half his total weight after gastric bypass surgery (at left), leaving him with a lot of excess skin. He chose to have it removed with an abdominoplasty, or tummy tuck.