

# Losing weight and winning big

**Bryan Bariatric Advantage helps Catherine change her life**

*Following her surgery, Catherine Leick enjoys a more active lifestyle — including trips to the park with her young niece and nephew, long walks and jogging — and she's giving CrossFit training a try, too!*

“I’ve dealt with stress and worry by eating since I was a child, and I’ve struggled with my weight as long as I can remember,” says Catherine Leick, 29, of Norfolk. “As I got older, the weight piled on until, at age 27, I hit 354 pounds.”

Catherine lost weight many times by diet and exercise, and even used diet pills, but that weight, and more, always returned.

“I knew I could be eligible for weight loss surgery, and thought about it for years,” she explains, “but kept hesitating because I wasn’t sure what the best procedure would be for me, and felt nervous about having surgery.”

“The tipping point came in 2015, when I hurt my knee and damaged a spinal disc in my lower back. I had severe pain all the

time, missed a lot of work, and was even too tired and in pain to see my friends. My doctor said that losing weight would reduce stress on my spine and could let my back heal and prevent further problems.

“At that point, I realized my quality of life had become so poor that I had to do something to change my situation. So I contacted Bryan Bariatric Advantage and scheduled a consultation to learn more about my options for weight loss surgery.”

At Bryan Bariatric Advantage, specially trained nurses called nurse navigators coordinate patients’ care before surgery and individualize care to their needs afterward. Weight loss surgery, also called “bariatric surgery,” does not offer a quick fix for obesity, but can be a dramatic turning point in the lives of people who are dangerously overweight. These surgeries, which help patients feel satisfied with less food, include the gastric bypass, sleeve gastrectomy and lap band procedures.



*Benjamin Hung, MD*

## PATIENT EXPERIENCE

These surgeries can be considered for patients who are extremely overweight, with or without obesity-related health problems like sleep apnea, high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes. Potential candidates receive a thorough evaluation to determine if weight loss surgery is appropriate.

Bariatric surgeon Benjamin Hung, MD, of Surgical Associates

performed Catherine's weight loss surgery, a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy procedure, at Bryan in June of 2016.

"Afterward, the nurses were great and kept my pain under control," Catherine says, "and the nurse navigators called or stopped by whenever I had a question."

Dr. Hung, who has practiced in Lincoln since 2001 and has done over 1,200 bariatric surgeries, describes the advantages of weight loss surgery.

"Obesity is very serious because it increases risk for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, and causes joint disease and many other problems. Bariatric surgery is a powerful tool that can help obese patients decrease their risk for these health problems and also improve their quality of life. Because of improved health they can often actually add years to their lives, and do more of what they want to do," he says.

Dr. Hung emphasizes, however, that bariatric surgery is only one part of the picture — it promotes greater weight loss for very overweight patients, but doesn't work alone. "Patients have to make a lifelong commitment to changing their exercise and diet habits after surgery, or the weight will return. That's why we provide lifelong support for our patients — to help them maintain these lifestyle changes."

Cindy Sayers, APRN, and Pam Wolfe, APRN, are the program's bariatric nurse navigators. As Cindy explains, "Bryan's lifelong patient support services include nutrition counseling with our dietitian, one-on-one counseling with our psychologists, monthly bariatric support groups and exercise consultation as needed." This aftercare is personalized to every patient's needs.

"And," she adds, "because weight loss surgery has a better long-term success rate than diet and exercise alone in helping very obese patients reach healthy weights, bariatric surgery is increasingly being covered by insurance companies."

"It's not uncommon for patients to get sidetracked from their healthy habits after surgery when some kind of life stress happens," says Ashley Larson, registered dietitian with Bryan Bariatric Advantage. "This is why we keep in touch with our patients, and if they need help



*Catherine appreciates the lifelong patient support patients receive from the Bryan Bariatric Advantage team, such as nurse navigators Cindy Sayers and Pam Wolfe.*



## PATIENT EXPERIENCE

getting back on track, we offer the support they need to return to their program.”

“Over the 14 months since my surgery,” says Catherine, “I’ve worked with the staff and counselors at Bryan Bariatric Advantage to learn how to cope in healthy ways, rather than by eating when I get stressed or worried. Now, I’m happy to say that food no longer controls me.”

Catherine has so far lost 168 pounds and is excited to be able to do so much more now. “I actually weigh less than I did at age 11, and can trade clothes with my friends — something I could never do, even as a kid. And I’m much more active — walking and jogging, and I just started CrossFit training.

“One thing I love to do,” she says, “is going to the park with my little niece and nephew, though in the past I’ve had to just sit on the

sidelines and watch them play with other people. This summer, when my nephew said ‘Aunt Katie! Come play on the slide with me!’ I could actually do it — in fact, we went down the slide together 17 times that day.

“I would suggest to anyone thinking about weight loss surgery that they contact Bryan Bariatric Advantage to learn about the different options and what is the right procedure for them. That was the first step for me — it’s helped me change my life.” ■

***Attend a free information session to learn how you can change your life, too! Learn more at [bryanhealth.org/loseweight](http://bryanhealth.org/loseweight), or call 402-481-5490.***

***To find out how you can support the work of Bryan Health, contact the Bryan Foundation at 402-481-8605.***

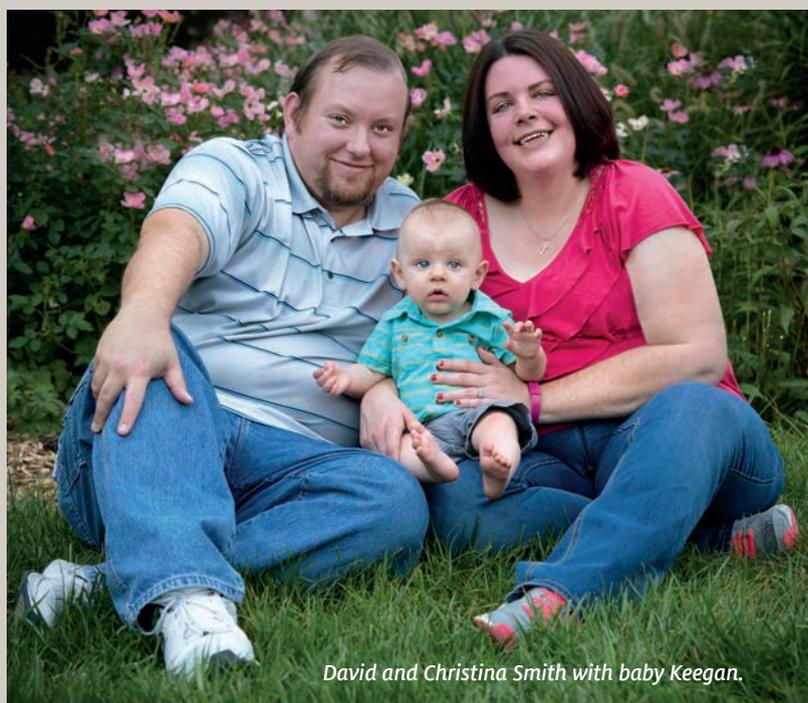
## New adventures for Christina

**F**ormer Bryan co-worker and bariatric surgery patient Christina (Perrier) Smith is enjoying significant changes in her life.

She had a gastric sleeve procedure on Dec. 31, 2012, and eventually lost more than 250 pounds. “Before fully committing myself to the Bryan Bariatric Advantage program, I was watching my life go by. But when I started losing all that weight, it was like a new world opened up for me,” she said in a 2014 *Journeys* story.

Since then, Christina married David Smith, moved with him to Belleville, Kansas, and then to Fort Worth — and the couple welcomed baby Keegan to their family on Jan. 19, 2017. The Smiths are back in Lincoln, where Christina works for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and David’s at Thunderstone Manufacturing.

“It’s been a long journey, and I’ve learned a lot,” she says. “Anyone curious about losing weight should understand that this isn’t a quick fix, it’s a lifestyle change. Never give up — and believe in yourself!”



*David and Christina Smith with baby Keegan.*