



## Spine surgery patient finds relief from pain

After undergoing a successful spine surgery, Ludovino Fernandez is thrilled to be back in his kitchen with his wife, Ivette.

**+PLUS**

**WELCOME NEW DOCS TO OUR NETWORK**

**WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY CHANGES LIVES**

# Top-notch health care, close to home

These are exciting times at Lawrence General Hospital! We are putting our vision for a healthier community to work in many ways, well beyond the walls of our hospital. We have opened new primary care offices in various locations to better serve our patients in the Merrimack Valley, including offices in Andover, North Andover, and Salem, New Hampshire. We have brought Women's Health Imaging into the community in our new Andover Medical Center building and introduced Rehabilitation Services at the newly expanded Andover/North Andover location of the Merrimack Valley YMCA.

To support the work of these fine, community-based health care providers, we are upgrading our Lawrence General Hospital facilities on General Street, replacing operating rooms that have served us faithfully for 50 years with a state-of-the-art surgery center. That building will be completed and ready to serve our patients by the end of the year.

In addition, I must extend gratitude to our hospital patients who have experienced firsthand the ongoing renovation of our inpatient units. One by one, we have been replacing the infrastructure of these patient care areas and rebuilding them with today's patients and families in mind. The rooms are more spacious, with more natural light and accommodations for families. We also are adding more private rooms. In addition, we are giving staff the surroundings to match the excellent care they provide, allowing them to be more efficient and spend more time at the bedside.

By the end of 2016, these new spaces will be complete, effectively providing our community with a new hospital within the walls of the existing buildings. And we won't stop there. There is much more work to do to ensure that the very best of health care is available as close to home as possible!



**Dianne J. Anderson, RN**

President and CEO, Lawrence General Hospital



## healthy living COMMITTED TO WELLNESS

When it comes to promoting health, Lawrence General is walking the talk. Its 1,800 employees have access to an array of internal program offerings aimed at helping them become healthier. The Employee Wellness Committee has organized walking programs, weight loss programs and yoga workshops, among other offerings.

In October 2015, the committee launched Let's Get Healthier, a yearlong program focused on promoting a healthy weight and reducing the risk of chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, arthritis and cancer. As of February 2016, 263 employees have enrolled in the program.

The committee held its annual walking challenge this past summer. Open to both individuals and teams, the walking challenge lasted about a month and a half. The "Fabulous Fit Foodies" from Food and Nutrition, pictured below, were this year's team winner with over 727,000 steps!



**Together, Lawrence General employees have walked over 50 million steps—that's over eight times across the United States.**

**DID YOU KNOW?** Lawrence General developed a clinical affiliation with Beth Israel Deaconess in 2011. The Lawrence General and Beth Israel Deaconess network provides cardiovascular care, bariatric surgery, gynecologic oncology, and intensive and critical care services, among other hospital-based services and primary care in our region.

## part of our network **LAWRENCE GENERAL WELCOMES NEW PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS**

Salem, New Hampshire

**1 Claudia Gabrielle, MD**, has many years of experience practicing family medicine in Salem. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

**2 Randall Fenton, MD**, also has practiced family medicine in southern New Hampshire for many years. He is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and began his career as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy Medical Corps.

Contact the practice of Drs. Gabrielle and Fenton at 630-870-5452.

Lawrence, Massachusetts

**3 Heling Dilone-Arellano, MD**, has practiced family medicine in Methuen for the past three years. She did her residency training at Columbia

University and New York Medical College at St. Joseph's Medical Center in New York. Dr. Dilone-Arellano is bilingual. Contact her practice at **978-946-8550**.

Andover, Massachusetts

**4 Roohi Khanna, MD**, has joined Community Medical Associates. She recently completed her family medicine residency as chief resident at Hackensack Medical Center in Montclair, New Jersey. Among her interests are preventive medicine and women's health. Contact her practice at **978-946-8386**.

**5 Grace Kim, MD**, joined Community Medical Associates after more than 35 years in solo private practice in Andover. She completed a psychiatry residency at Sheppard Pratt Hospital in Towson, Maryland; a hematology residency at West Virginia University

Medical Center in Morgantown, West Virginia; and a family practice residency and internship at Capitol Hill Hospital in Washington, D.C. Contact her office at **978-475-5656**.

**6 Michael Boutros (Pierre) Ghassibi, MD**, is now accepting patients at North Andover Family Primary Care. He completed his family medicine residency at Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Contact his practice at **978-687-7235**.

**7 Spyridon Kantas, MD**, has joined Andover Primary Care. He is board-certified in internal medicine and speaks Greek in addition to English. He completed his residency at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

**8 Andrew Lim, MD**, has joined the Lawrence General and Beth Israel Deaconess network



as a board-certified family medicine physician. He did his residency in family medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

Contact the office of Drs. Kantas and Lim at **978-256-4121**.

**FIND YOUR PHYSICIAN**  
Visit [lawrencegeneral.org/physicians/choose-a-doctor.aspx](http://lawrencegeneral.org/physicians/choose-a-doctor.aspx).

# Now he's cooking!

Spine surgery patient finds relief from back and leg pain—and gets back to his routine in the kitchen

**Ludovino Fernandez couldn't sleep.** Pain in his lower back tormented him at night. During the day, the pain was so bad that sometimes he thought he would faint. He had numbness in his right leg and foot, and his legs felt heavy and awkward when he walked. It had started with a car accident about a year ago. He returned to work after a week, but even with months of rehabilitation therapy and medical pain management, the pain did not subside.

Ludovino, or Duly, as his friends call him, moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic 14 years ago and speaks very little English. He sought help from several doctors and other providers but was uncomfortable that some of his caregivers didn't speak Spanish. Ultimately, he says, he went to see Nikhil Thakur, MD, an orthopedic spine surgeon leading the new spine surgery program at Lawrence General Hospital. "He speaks a little Spanish," Duly says with a smile.

"I thought that injections were probably a temporary solution and that I would need surgery eventually," Duly says, with his wife, Ivette, interpreting. "Surgery is always a little scary, but Dr. Thakur was very confident he could fix the problem. He gave me very specific details about the procedure, and described the size of the incision and the type of implant he would use. He came highly recommended, and I felt comfortable I was in good hands."

## Treatment Time

Duly underwent four hours of delicate surgery in late August 2015. Throughout the surgery, Dr. Thakur was able to monitor the nerves in Duly's back through a neuromonitoring system in order to prevent peripheral nerve damage. "These

resources at Lawrence General have allowed me to significantly improve the quality of life for many patients like Mr. Fernandez," comments Dr. Thakur. "We're restoring people's daily function and mobility using methods that have not been available here before."

"We spent two nights and three days at Lawrence General after surgery," Ivette remembers. A nurse herself, she was very impressed with the care. "The medications were always on time, they were very kind and careful to monitor his neurological function after surgery, and they kept him comfortable. It was always quiet at night."

## Back at It

Six months after surgery, Duly is free from the pain he was

experiencing before the surgery. His legs feel normal for the first time in a long time, and his numbness is gone. Duly is thrilled. He is sleeping through the night and taking the flight of stairs up to their second-floor apartment with ease. "I did six weeks of rehabilitation at Lawrence General's rehab center on Marston Street. The fact that they speak Spanish was incredibly helpful in understanding my recovery process," Duly says. He also liked the customer service at Lawrence General; even the patient billing was smoother than he had experienced before.

"He's able to keep up with me at the mall now," says Ivette. "It's such a relief to see him get better so quickly."



## FIND RELIEF

To learn more about surgical services at Lawrence General, visit [lawrencegeneral.org/services-and-centers/surgery/](http://lawrencegeneral.org/services-and-centers/surgery/).

## NAVIGATING THE SPINE

In early 2016, Lawrence General Hospital purchased specialized computer-assisted surgical navigation equipment that is not currently available for spine surgery at any other Massachusetts hospital north of Boston. The system uses three-dimensional mapping and an optical navigation camera to guide the surgeon during spine surgeries.

“The spine navigation technology, the various spine surgical resources and the specialized surgical and nursing staff allow me to deliver safe, expeditious and precise care to my patients. Thus, the surgical spine outcomes have been tremendous,” comments Nikhil Thakur, MD, head of the new spine surgery program at Lawrence General.



**Spine surgeon Nikhil Thakur, MD, is making the difference for patients like Ludovino Fernandez at Lawrence General.**

**After undergoing a successful spine surgery to treat back and leg pain, Ludovino Fernandez is happy to be back in his kitchen and moving around free of the pain he experienced before surgery.**





## TAKE THE WEIGHT OFF

For more information on Lawrence General's Weight Loss and Bariatric Surgery Program, visit [lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss](http://lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss). Here, you can also meet the program's staff and take an online bariatric self-assessment.

**Damaris Morales wanted to play with her daughter**, but it was something she could not easily do because of her weight. So Damaris talked with her physician, Daniel Sanchez, MD, of Lawrence General's Community Medical Associates, and came to a life-changing decision.

"We decided that I was a good candidate for surgical weight loss, and that is when I began my bariatric journey," Damaris remembers. She was referred to Lawrence General's Weight Loss and Bariatric Surgery Program. The program, located at 25 Marston Street, less than a mile from I-495, is a full-service, accredited bariatric surgery program serving the Merrimack Valley.

"There are many steps to the process, including meetings with various experts in weight loss who help you prepare for surgery. It can take a few months before you are ready, but that is expected, and the time preparing helps you to be more successful," Damaris says.

"It has taken these patients many years to get to the point where they are candidates for bariatric surgery," observes bariatric surgeon Victor Villarreal, MD. "They are candidates based on their body mass and associated medical issues, like blood pressure and diabetes. It will take work on their part to be successful, but we tell them they have a team behind them, working with them to help them lose the weight."

"The day of the surgery is the best day of your life," says Damaris, now more than a year past her surgery date. "It is something that changes your life. When I started the program I weighed 280 pounds. I am down to 160 pounds now. I am eating better and exercising. The pain in my joints and my lower back is gone. I jump rope and run with my daughter. I can move with her. I feel free."

 Visit [lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss](http://lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss) to hear Damaris tell her story.

# Feeling free

Bariatric surgery is a life-changing journey for Lawrence resident

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 28.9 percent of adults were obese in 2014.

# A new vision of health care

Lawrence General launches new **TOGETHER** campaign



**As Lawrence General strives to respond to the changing needs of the communities it serves,** the hospital is blessed to have generous supporters, for whom our mission resonates in a particularly compelling way. Richard and Marilyn Santagati have demonstrated they are among those strongest of advocates by giving Lawrence General the largest single donation the hospital has ever received. In early February, the Santagatis announced a \$1.25 million pledge of early support for our Master Facility Plan.

“This is a very important project for our community,” says Richard. “Communities are measured in large part by their ability to take care of the residents who live there. Lawrence General has a major responsibility to provide care for the Merrimack Valley and the larger region. Our facilities must match the high-quality care provided by the committed people who work here. We want the employees and physicians at

Lawrence General Hospital to know how much we value and rely on their professionalism.”

“We are humbled by the generosity of the Santagatis,” comments Dianne J. Anderson, RN, president and CEO of Lawrence General Hospital. “This Master Facility Plan is the biggest investment that Lawrence General has made in its history; it represents our commitment to serve the health needs of this region, and we are growing and evolving to do just that. It is the highest compliment I can imagine to have one of our trustees—one who has been with us for more than 20 years—express this deep confidence in our vision and direction.”

Our profound thanks goes to the Santagatis and others like them who are helping ensure that Lawrence General will have the facilities, technology and highly-trained care team to serve the needs of our communities for years to come!

**Lawrence General surgical staff look on as longtime Lawrence General trustee Richard Santagati announces his \$1.25 million pledge to the hospital.**

## **GIVE BACK**

If you'd like to join the Santagatis in supporting our mission, log on to **lawrencegeneral.org/together**, and look for more information in your mail soon.

**Dianne J. Anderson, RN**  
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**Jill McDonald Halsey**  
Chief Marketing and Communication  
Officer  
**Kristen Deveau**  
Marketing and Communications Specialist

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Lawrence General Hospital is offering free weight loss surgery information sessions on the third Tuesday of each month in 2016. Join us to learn more about the Weight Loss Surgery Program, or try our online Weight Loss Self-Assessment at [lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss](http://lawrencegeneral.org/weightloss), to help determine if you could be a candidate for bariatric surgery.

**UPCOMING SESSIONS:**  
April 19 and May 17  
Time: 6-7 p.m.  
Location: Kurth Auditorium, 2nd Floor, Lawrence General Hospital

**COME JOIN US**  
Call **978-946-8450** to register for our FREE surgical weight loss information session.



**Lawrence General provides free valet parking**



Photo: Jonathan Kannair

We know that parking can be challenging under the best of circumstances. We also understand that Lawrence General Hospital's hilltop location presents a daunting walk from the parking lot to the front door. That's why we offer free valet parking for the convenience of our patients and visitors. Simply drive your vehicle up to our front door, and we will park your car for you and bring it back to the front door when you are ready to go home. After hours, our security personnel will drive you to your car in our valet lot.

For those who prefer to park their own vehicle, we also offer free shuttle service from our patient parking areas, and between our two Lawrence locations at 1 General Street and 25 Marston Street.

**Lawrence  
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for patients  
and visitors  
to access its  
hilltop location  
by offering free  
valet parking.**