

# SidelyBYSide

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## Total Joint Replacement Program Changes Lives

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# NCH's Total Joint Replacement Program Changes Lives

By Lily Tung Crystal

For 15 years, Carol Ann Burnham suffered from osteoarthritis—a condition that occurs when the cartilage between the bones wears down over time. Doctors told her she should get a left knee replacement, but she refused. “I was afraid of surgery,” Carol Ann admits, “and the pain got so bad that I couldn’t even walk a block.”

Carol Ann also had trouble using stairs and could no longer play golf or tennis. More importantly, she was forced to give up one of her and her husband Don’s treasured activities. “On Sunday afternoons we liked to go for a walk together; it was our time to visit. When I had to quit, I realized I had to do something.”

On a friend’s recommendation, she met with Robert Mayle, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Novato Community Hospital (NCH) who specializes in minimally invasive surgery. She immediately knew that she had come to the right doctor.

“I was so impressed that I agreed to surgery,” Carol Ann recalls. “He has this quiet confidence about him that’s contagious. I felt like I was in good hands.”

## Listen to the Knee

Carol Ann had never been in a hospital overnight and didn’t know what to expect, but NCH’s Total Joint Replacement Program not only walks patients through surgery, but also cares for them from pre-op through recovery. For pre-op, she first met with Jennifer Lehr, director of NCH’s Orthopedic Service Line, who explained the entire process to her. “She was terrific,” says Carol Ann. “I was prepared.”

Then thanks to Dr. Mayle’s minimally invasive techniques, Carol Ann’s surgery in October was a success. “We make a smaller incision, and we listen to the knee,” says Mayle. “It always tells us what’s tight and needs to be released, what needs to be cut and what needs to be saved. We treat only what’s necessary so that we don’t do too much.”

The procedure was so smooth that Carol Ann was on her feet the next day and started physical therapy (PT). She left NCH just two days after she arrived, not in a wheelchair but using a walker. “I can’t say enough about NCH,” says Carol Ann. “Everyone was so professional and caring. They encouraged me and gave me confidence.”

## Back on the Trail

Carol Ann continued her recovery with two weeks of in-home PT and then outpatient care at NCH’s Physical Therapy & Sports Fitness. “My entire experience was completely positive,” Carol Ann recalls. “Everyone was warm and nurturing and wanted me to have the best possible outcome. They got me back together.”

Carol Ann’s outcome was so good, in fact, that she’s back taking those two-mile hikes with Don. “She told me that she went on her favorite walk and welled up with tears,” Lehr recalls. “She was so happy and proud of herself. That’s what’s so rewarding about this work. It’s wonderful watching people change their lives.”

Carol Ann will be able to return to golf and tennis someday, but “it’s the little things that seem most important,” she muses. “At first, I just wanted to be able to get out of the car and walk. I never imagined that I could live pain-free and do all these activities. If I had known what I know now I would have had surgery long ago.” ❀

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