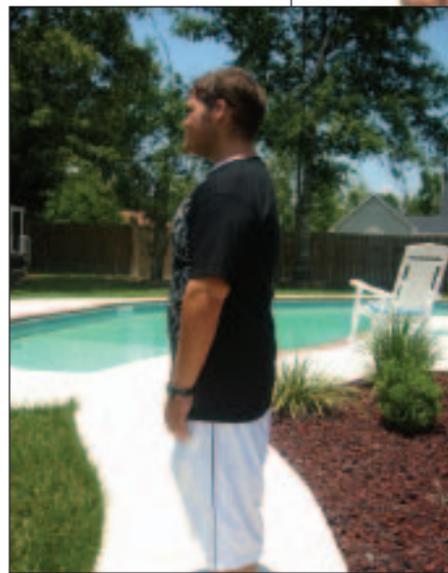


# Winning the Battle

## The Surgical Specialists of Louisiana



After battling his weight since age 12, Jeremy now weighs less than 235 pounds. He had gastric bypass surgery in January and has lost 138 pounds.

JEREMY POULTON HAD BEEN battling his weight for the majority of his 19 years. For most of this time, it was a losing battle. Until now.

Jeremy's mom, Denise, tracks his weight problem back to the fourth grade. "Every year, his weight got progressively worse," she says. "The school was calling me in for conferences about his inability to stay awake in class. They wanted me to get him tested for sleep apnea. But I never did. He'd always had a lot of friends, but I could tell he was hurting. And it was just heartbreaking, because you don't want to see your child in pain."

At 5-feet-10-inches tall, 373 pounds and a size-50 pants, Jeremy was so large that the mattress on his bed was caving in. He had to sleep with his head elevated, waking up three to four times a night to clear his throat, as if he had smoker's cough. He knew he had to do something.

"I stayed on my mom for over a year to check into weight loss surgery. I'd come home from school and say 'Mom, did you call about the surgery today?' My size was affecting my life in every way. I've always had a lot of friends. But I know they felt bad for me. I knew I was a good football player, but I wasn't as aggressive as I should have been because I didn't want to hurt anybody."

It was last September, his first month as a senior in high school, when Jeremy met with Dr. Tom Lavin, of The Surgical Specialists of Louisiana, to discuss the

*"He is so much happier. He's become more extroverted. He likes to have conversations now. Lots of people notice the change in him and some of his friends who haven't seen him since they left for college don't even recognize him."*

possibility of surgery. Dr. Lavin remembers Jeremy walking into his office. He says, "All I could think was, 'What a great kid!' He was quiet and shy. He stole the heart of everyone on our staff. I told him 'Jeremy, you're 18 years old. You have high cholesterol, sleep apnea and Type-2 diabetes. This surgery is the tool you need to change your life.' His eyes lit up when I told him what the outcome could be."

But they hit a roadblock. Jeremy's insurance company denied coverage of weight loss surgery. The SSL staff knew what an incredible difference the surgery would make in Jeremy's life, so they spoke with the medical director of his insurance company. While his weight issues began at the age of 12, his obesity and medically related illnesses had significantly worsened over the last six years. Once the staff presented Jeremy's case to the insurance company, the denial

was overturned and Jeremy was approved for surgery.

This past January, Jeremy had laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery at Southern Surgical Hospital in Slidell. Just two weeks after surgery, he tried out for the high school tennis team and made it. He says he's looking forward to getting down to 200 pounds to see just how athletic he really is.

Both of his parents note how much more confident Jeremy is. "He is so much happier. He's become more extroverted. He likes to have conversations now. Lots of people notice the change in him and some of his friends who haven't seen him since they left for college don't even recognize him."

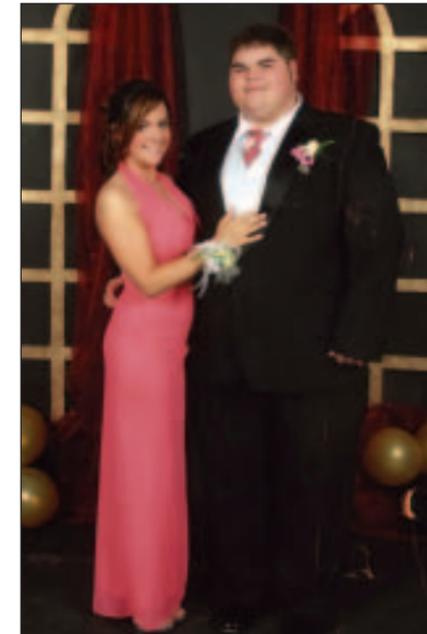
Jeremy adds, "Everything's gotten easier. People at school are saying, 'What did you do? Get taller?' I think that's because they can actually see my neck now."

Ten weeks after surgery, Jeremy had lost 105 pounds. With prom approaching, one of the nurses asked, "So Jeremy, who are you going to ask to the prom?"

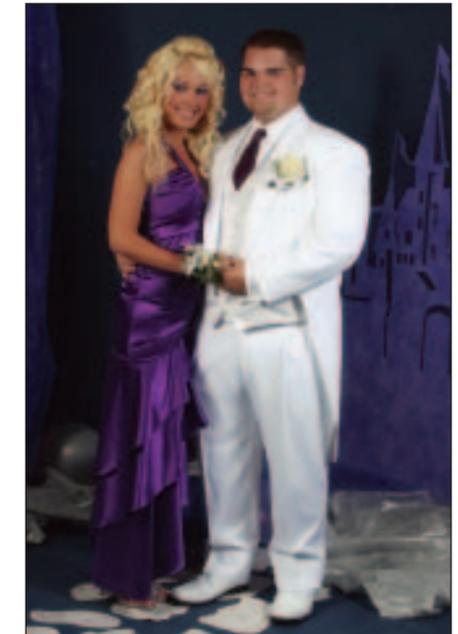
He smiled a huge grin. With a twinkle in his eye he said, "I already have a date. She asked me."

The realization of his possible brush with an early death quickly swings Jeremy's emotional pendulum. With tears streaming down his face, he expresses why he wanted to go through with the surgery. "I didn't want Mom to worry about what I would go through for the rest of my life. And I did it so my parents wouldn't see me go to an early grave. Because that's what would have happened if I didn't have this surgery."

As he left Dr. Lavin's office on his way to the airport for spring break, smiling once again, Jeremy told the nurses, "I'm really looking forward to getting on that plane and having a comfortable ride. I can't remember the last time I could fit in just one seat on an airplane."



Prom 2007



Prom 2008

The Surgical Specialists of Louisiana office is located at 1750 Hwy. 190 East Service Road in Covington. Free weight loss surgery seminars are held on a weekly basis in various locations. For more information, call 985-234-3000 or visit [www.whyweight.com](http://www.whyweight.com).



By his senior year, Jeremy, at 18 years old, had high cholesterol, sleep apnea and Type-2 diabetes. He weighed 373 pounds.

