

DR. ROBERT SKALICKY: CHANGING THE FACE OF PLASTIC SURGERY

By Dava Guerin



This Bucks County plastic and reconstructive surgeon operates with one simple philosophy—put patients first. For Dr. Robert Skalicky, every patient presents an opportunity for improvement. For the past 15 years, this lifelong Bucks County surgeon has been performing the full gambit of plastic surgery procedures—from breast reconstruction and eyelid surgery to abdominoplasty—in an effort to help his patient’s look and feel their best. But, for him, one of the most rewarding aspects of the job is communicating with his patients, listening to their needs and concerns, and, ultimately, changing their lives for the better.

“I want my patients to be happy with their final surgical results. Listening to their concerns and desires is as critical to success as the surgical techniques,” Skalicky said. “Experience has taught me that honesty and communication are critical in making the best decisions for both the patient and the surgeon. It is important for patients to understand not only what plastic surgery can accomplish but, also, what it cannot.”

Skalicky, 48, is medical director of The Aesthetic Institute at DSI Bucks County, and senior surgeon and founder of Bucks County Plastic Surgery. He is also on staff at St. Mary Medical Center, Frankford Hospital, and the

Barix Clinics, and has been recognized for his work in breast and body surgery. His newest center, opening in Newtown this winter, will contain an on-site surgical suite for patient convenience and confidentiality. His practice covers all aspects of plastic and cosmetic surgery with an emphasis on breast and body contouring.

“I love the diversity of procedures in my practice. That helps to keep me challenged,” he said. “Many patients come to me because they need breast reconstruction and others, after they have lost significant amounts of weight and need loose skin tightened,” Skalicky added. “Recently, I had a patient who lost 300 lbs and I combined procedures to tailor his life back together. It was a remarkable story because the patient lost the weight without bariatric surgery, and was motivated to do so because he couldn’t physically fit in a car. That really touched me, and I decided to donate the procedures that weren’t insurance covered because he was so inspiring.”

Today, when people look at the wind-blown facelifts, sometimes common in Hollywood, many cringe. What may have been the norm many years ago, explains Skalicky, just isn’t the case today. “Cosmetic surgery changes and evolves over time as do patient requests and expectations. What I find today is that

patients want to look more youthful, but in a natural way. They no longer want a surgical or ‘operated look.’ What I strive to accomplish is to turn back the clock, but not violate the natural contours of the body. That is the trick to obtaining a beautiful result,” said Skalicky.

According to a survey conducted by the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons in April 2008, 700 of the survey respondents reported that their business was down by as much as 30 percent. Even in a down economy, Skalicky and his partners, Drs. Lam and Scarlett, have seen only a slight decrease in major cosmetic surgery procedures, and have actually increased their non-surgical procedures such as Botox, Juvederm, and laser treatments. “In my practice, it seems that when one procedure decreases, another one picks up,” he said. “Also, minimally invasive procedures such as mini-facelifts and eyelid surgery offer patients less expensive ways to look refreshed and younger with less down-time and recovery. I don’t know how 2009 will be in terms of the economy, but I suspect that people will still pursue many of these treatments to compete for jobs in the workplace that is still youth and image-driven,” Skalicky explained.

But for Skalicky, he lives his life as if there were no tomorrow. “Most people view life as an infinite timeline but, unfortunately, there is only so much sand in the hourglass,” said Skalicky. And he has much to fit in before the hourglass empties. “I have two children and try to spend as much time with them as I can, going to hockey games and pursuing their outside interests. Life is all about balance. I always wanted to learn to play the piano and violin and, thanks to one of my patients, have started doing so.”

For Skalicky, he loves being a surgeon but doesn’t lose sight of the overall picture of life. “I know the hourglass is emptying. I’m just trying to look at each grain of sand a little more closely as it does.”

Dava Guerin is Bucks Living Magazine’s People Editor and lives in Washington Crossing, PA.