

# ALL IN THE Family

## Weight loss surgery helps siblings get healthier

story by **Alexis Williams**

photos courtesy of **Stephanie Brown**

One of nine siblings, Stephanie Brown of Pascagoula, is the fifth of her brothers and sisters to undergo a surgical weight loss procedure. "My mom was a big woman and so was her mom," said Brown. "We just had those genes that everybody is big in our family. Everybody on my side of the family is heavy; there is not a person who is tiny."

Growing up, her mom and dad were divorced. "Mom was a single mom and fed us what she could," said Brown. "We ate corn bread and beans and syrup and biscuits. We always ate real Southern food."

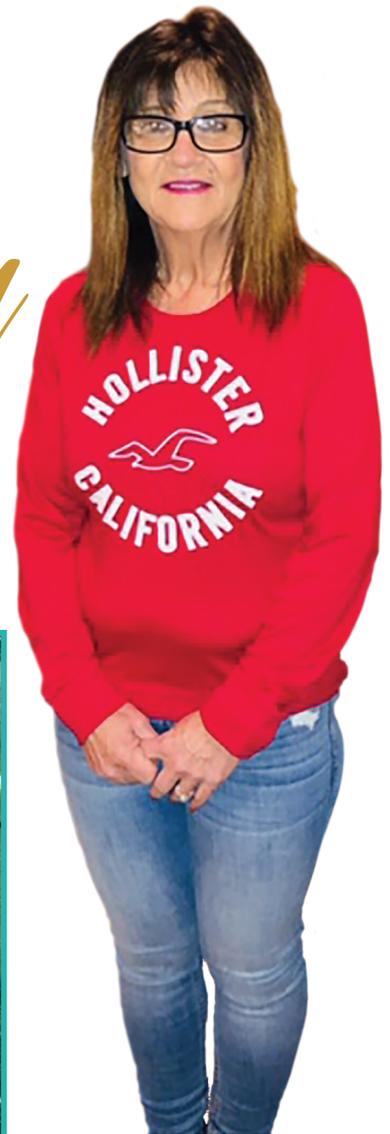
Brown, now 53, had a gastric bypass more than two years ago and is now 175 pounds lighter than the day she underwent surgery at Singing River Hospital, weighing in at 324 pounds. A customer service manager at Wal Mart, Brown had wanted to have the surgery for several years after she saw the success of her siblings. Her husband was hesitant, but they finally agreed and her health changed for the better after that.

"I used to take blood pressure medicine and medicine for acid reflux," adds Brown. "My blood pressure went down immediately, and they took me off my medicine." She later stopped her acid reflux medication and has never had acid reflux again.

Before her surgery, Brown says she was tired all the time and when not working, she slept and ate most of the time. Now, she is able to do much more. She works out and is able to play with both of her grandchildren. "I have a one-year-old grand baby, and I can get on the floor with him," she said. "When I go to Florida to see my other grandchild, we can go bowling and throw the football."

Brown's eating habits have also changed due to her surgery. "I eat a whole lot less and don't have cravings like I used to," she said. "I eat smaller portions, and can only eat so much without getting sick."

Brown now eats anywhere from four to six ounces at each meal and usually just eats two meals a day. She sticks to vegetables, some meats and salads, but never sweets because they make her ill post-surgery. "Every now and then I'll eat



**LEFT: BROWN before seeing South Mississippi Surgical Weight Loss. ABOVE: BROWN after her gastric bypass surgery and losing 175 pounds.**

fried foods or French fries, but I don't gorge myself like I did before the surgery."

She loves to shop for clothes and now has the joy to be able to walk in a store and see something in her size and buy it.

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