

## HEALTHY LIVING

## Add BEAUTY to the résumé

Plastic surgery, Botox a business expense for some who want 'sparkle'

BY JENNIFER BRETT  
Cox News Service

Six months ago, Donna McClung made what she considers a business investment to better face a tough economy: cosmetic surgery.

A single mom who works in technology sales, McClung, 51, saved for 10 months to pay for \$23,000 worth of work to her face, neck and eye area.

"It's a highly competitive business, and first impressions are very important," said McClung, who saw Dr. Seth Yellin at Emory Facial Center.

Yvette Jones paid Dr. Burke Robinson's practice a recent visit for similar reasons.

"It's important for me to stay on the cutting edge — pardon the pun," said Jones, a medical sales consultant. She gets far less expensive Botox treatments but is considering a brow lift.

"You're in your 50s and in the workplace with people in their 20s and 30s," Jones said. "It's competitive out there."

A sagging economy has produced a dual trend, area plastic surgeons say. They're seeing fewer patients opt for pricey overhauls like McClung's, but are staying busy with patients like Jones, who want temporary, less expensive spruce-ups. Both groups of patients increasingly view plastic surgery as a business move, rather than a fashionable frill.

"I have seen clients in real estate who feel they need to look young," said Dr. Melissa Babcock. Lots of clients wait for the discounts her practice sometimes runs, like \$250 Botox treatments (it's usually more like \$400). And it's not just women looking to spruce up. Babcock recently treated a male CEO who needs to drum up financing, and he wanted to lose the deep furrows first.



BRANT SANDERLIN / COX NEWS SERVICE

Donna McClung is a single mother who works in sales. With the economy uncertain, she invested in a Botox procedure, which she feels will give her more confidence.

"He doesn't want to have an angry look because it's hard to get money right now," she said. "He wants to look refreshed."

National trade groups report a surge of plastic surgery over the past decade. Data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons show nearly 12 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in 2007, a 7 percent increase from the year before. The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery says Americans spent \$8.3 billion for surgical procedures



and \$4.7 billion for nonsurgical in 2007. Neither group had 2008 data.

Dr. Foad Nahai of Paces Plastic Surgery in Atlanta is past president of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

"There is no question that the more invasive, more

effective, more expensive face-lifts are down," he said. "They may postpone a face-lift that costs thousands of dollars, but they'll come in for injectables to just freshen up."

Many of his patients are women in real estate, he said.

"They feel a younger, rejuvenated face will have more success selling homes," said Nahai, also president of the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons.

Dr. Chip Cole of Oculus Cosmetic Surgeons in Atlanta says some patients seek procedures while in between jobs, using the downtime to recover.

"The person who looks their best, whatever their best is, is going to do a better job," he said.

Teresa Duggan, an etiquette consultant and expert in corporate protocol, works with clients looking to put their best faces forward.

With the help of Dr. Alex Gross at Georgia Dermatology Center in Cumming, Ga., she tries to do the same.

"You've got to be selling yourself all the time," Duggan said. "You know when you look good. You have that little extra sparkle. People pick up on that."

Robinson says some patients see cosmetic procedures as key to surviving layoffs.

"When there are cuts being made, they don't want to look like the one that can't do their job anymore," he said. "As the boomers are getting older, they are at their peak performance for their job, yet they may be overlooked. It's almost like women coloring their hair. Once you've given up those lines and wrinkles, it's hard to go back."

Some patients are determined not to, even if money is tight, he said.

"I had a client come in who said, 'I told my husband, I'll do broke, but I won't do ugly.'" ■

## Victim of 2007 outbreak: 'Salmonella ruined me'

BY MONI BASU  
Cox News Service

Michael Thomas had nine siblings, but he was the one who grew up as the "peanut butter kid." His idea of a great meal was a classic PB and J: white bread slathered with jelly and half a jar of the creamy, nutty all-American spread.

But the last time he ate peanut butter was on Feb. 27, 2007.

Two days later, Thomas woke up at his home with dry heaves, stomach cramps, diarrhea and bloody mucus. He was treated at a local hospital, but two years later, Thomas is still sick.

He was diagnosed with a salmonella infection believed to be linked to Peter Pan, made at the ConAgra Foods plant in Sylvester, Ga., though no stool culture was taken to confirm it. Peter Pan was part of a previous outbreak of salmonella in 2006-07 that affected hundreds of people nationwide.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 40,000 cases of salmonella poisoning are reported every year. About 400 people die, and a fraction of those who fall ill from the food-borne bacterial infection develop health issues

"I had never been sick a day of my life. Then salmonella ruined me — physically, emotionally and financially."

— Michael Thomas

on the impact a salmonella infection has had on his life.

that include chronic arthritis, eye irritation, irritable bowel syndrome, gallbladder problems and painful urination.

"It's pain, pain and more pain," Thomas said in an interview. "I had never been sick a day of my life. Then salmonella ruined me — physically, emotionally and financially."

As victims of the recent outbreak of salmonella begin to speak out, those who continue to suffer, like Thomas, expressed disappointment that more Americans are falling ill.

So far, the outbreak linked to a Blakely, Ga., peanut processing plant has sickened more than 550 people and may have contributed to the deaths of eight. The plant is owned by Peanut Corp. of America.

For the first 5 ½ months, Thomas said, he could not even get out of bed. He took antibiotics for almost 11 months. He could no longer work as a real estate lender. He had no health insurance and visited emergency rooms when he felt extremely ill. He could not keep up with bills and lost his house.

"My life fell apart in Georgia," said Thomas, 52, who moved from suburban Atlanta to Detroit a year ago to be with his son.

Dr. W. Hayes Wilson, chief of rheumatology at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, said some people born with the HLA-B27 antigen on their cells are predisposed to developing reactive arthritis after suffering from bacterial infections,

including salmonellosis.

"Genetics are the loaded gun. Salmonella pulls the trigger," Wilson said.

In others, salmonella can lodge in the gallbladder and make that person a chronic carrier of the bacteria, said Dr. Carlos del Rio, chief of medicine at Grady Hospital.

"They may need gallbladder removal," he said. "Or they could infect other people."

Studies have also associated salmonella infections with gastric and bladder cancer.

Thomas said his father had called him after hearing about the 2006-07 outbreak to warn the "peanut butter kid" to stay away from his staple. But he had already eaten Peter Pan with a batch number that contained salmonella.

"This has ruined my life," said Thomas.

He still has the half-empty jar of Peter Pan he believes made him sick for a lifetime.

And though he craves the nutty stuff, he now reaches for a slice or two of bologna instead. ■