

Moving in the Right Direction

Cliff Kraft had no complaints about winter this year. Every weekend, he and his wife, Sue, would head to Hammond Hill in Dryden to cross-country ski over the wooded trails on the pristine snow.

That he was able to take up skiing just six months after having his right hip replaced at Cayuga Medical Center still amazes Kraft, an associate professor of natural resources at Cornell. He's also surprised he's been able to swim nearly five days a week on campus at Teagle Pool—freestyle with kicking—which he wasn't able to before his surgery. "I'm doing all the things that I thought I wasn't going to do again," says Kraft, 61.

For about six years, Kraft suffered from a growing pain in his right hip but didn't know what was causing it. Gradually, he started having discomfort walking, climbing stairs, and kicking in the swimming pool. Finally in May 2013, he went to see Dr. Andrew Getzin, a sports medicine specialist at Cayuga Medical Center. "He took an X-ray and said, 'You don't have a hip,'" Kraft recalls.

Getzin advised him to see one of the new orthopedic surgeons in Ithaca, Dr. Deidre Blake, and when Kraft called her office, he was given an appointment a couple of days later. On the advice of his brother, who is a doctor, Kraft also decided to get a second opinion from a surgeon out of town and received an appointment about two months later.

Kraft, however, never did get that second opinion after meeting with Blake. "She is an impressive human being," he says. "She's highly skilled, she's nice, and she's dedicated. And she communicates exceptionally well with other people."

Blake, who joined Orthopedic Services of Cayuga Medical Associates in 2013, had a fellowship at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, which is considered one of the top hospitals in the world for joint replacement. When she first met with Kraft and began answering his questions, she understood his initial reluctance to have her perform his surgery.



Deidre Blake, MD

"We have an educated population and they want top-notch, trained doctors, and they're willing to travel," Blake says. "What people in the community should know is that Cayuga Medical Associates is investing the time and energy to bring the best orthopedic surgeons right to this community so people don't have to travel. And they receive more personal care at a smaller hospital."

Blake diagnosed Kraft with a congenital disorder that causes the formation of a shallow socket in the hip, which leads to early arthritis. During the surgery on June 24, Blake used a newer generation prosthesis that makes the hip more stable and less susceptible to dislocation. The artificial hip is made out of a blend of metal alloys.

After the surgery, Blake visited Kraft in the hospital for the next two days, and two weeks later she removed the ends of his sutures during an office visit. "If I had gone out of town for the surgery, I would have met the surgeon once and never seen the person again in my life,"

Kraft says. That was not the case with Blake. "The amount of time she spent with me was extraordinary. I tell this to everyone who wants to hear about my hip replacement: I can't imagine getting better care than I got from her."

When Kraft scheduled his surgery, he told Blake he wanted to be able to attend the wedding of his friend's daughter at the end of August. After several weeks of physical therapy with Karl Bergmann, PT, ScD, at the Brentwood Drive location of Cayuga Medical Center Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine, Kraft drove to the wedding in Nashua, NH. "There wasn't a person there who would have imagined that I had been incapacitated in the hospital on June 24," he says.

Within two months after his surgery, Kraft also drove to Québec City to attend the American Fisheries Society annual meeting, as his research at Cornell focuses on managing fisheries and aquatic resources. And in October, he flew to San Francisco, where he and his son, Ben, climbed the steep hills overlooking the city.

Kraft credits the care he received at Cayuga Medical Center and specifically the skill of his surgeon for his successful recovery. "I'm really grateful to Deidre Blake for being here in this community and for wanting to make this her place of home and work," he says. "I think the community has really benefited from that."



Karl Bergmann, PT, ScD



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