

Ronald Perry, 55

Tarpon Springs, Florida

Surgery at AdventHealth Carrollwood (Fla.) under the care of Brian Palumbo, MD and in coordination with the Pioneer Medical Foundation in Tampa

December 4, 2022, right hip replacement

Ronald Perry, 55, of Tarpon Springs, Florida has always been inspired by the relationships he has enjoyed in life and work. He chose to become a hairdresser after caring for his mom and the wigs she wore as a cancer patient more than 40 years ago.

He has spent the last 30 of those years trying to make his clients “feel better when they leave than when they walk in” and remains passionate about his chosen profession. “I don’t look at it as work,” he says.

Hairdressing is a high energy job as you listen to Ronald describing it: “we stand all day, eat on the go from lunch until dinnertime and before you know it you look at the clock and its 9 pm. You clean up and start all over again the next morning. Many of the things we do involve repetitive motion.”

Ron has enjoyed a lifetime of hair and fashion shows and working as an independent contractor for nearly 18 years with the same salon. He spent his free time traveling, enjoying yoga and cycling among other exercise.

Then four years ago he started experiencing what he thought was sciatic pain in his lower back. After a client’s husband, a doctor, insisted he get an X-ray, Ron was told he had no cartilage in his right hip and the left would soon be the same.

He had to do something but had no insurance.

The pain increased to the point that he had to stop working and was homebound during the pandemic with his most comfortable position being on his side with the support of a pillow. He went from using a cane to a walker. He tried acupuncture and massage but surgery was his ultimate option.

It’s then that his relationships inspired him again. His friend Lee Ann Daniel, a client who became a dear friend, heard about Operation Walk USA and its annual holiday tradition of providing free joint replacements for patients who can’t afford them. She surprised Ron around his birthday last spring with the news that she had submitted an application on his behalf.

On December 4, Ron will have his right hip replaced under the care of orthopaedic surgeon Brian Palumbo, MD, at AdventHealth Carrollwood (Fla.) and in coordination with Pioneer Medical Foundation.

“I am still in a state of disbelief as to how I was picked and feel like I have won the lottery,” he says. “I am so grateful.”

Ron says he can't wait to be able to go to a restaurant, walk on the beach, see a movie or visit a museum. He also says he can't wait to donate that walker! “I am looking forward to going back to work and have kept in touch with my clients who continue to wish me well.”

What has Ron learned? “To take care of your health and put yourself first. If your body is trying to tell you something, listen. When you feel good, you have more patience and joy in your heart. Right now I am in pain all the time but I'm also happy all the time and don't like to complain.”

Ron will be back in his salon soon and returning to a quality of life and mobility he once enjoyed. “This is my story,” he says. “In the end, I try to inspire my clients. My job is to help them leave feeling better than when they arrived.”

And having those inspiring relationships is what Ron is all about.