

A SURGEON'S HEALING TOUCH: CALEB'S STORY

ENDOSCOPIC APPROACH TO SPINE SURGERY PUTS ROSEVILLE YOUTH BACK ON TRACK

STORY BY Joanna Jullian

When 13-year-old Caleb Anderson was diagnosed with scoliosis (abnormal curve of the spine) last summer, it turned out to be the beginning of a whole new world for him and his family. The healing touch of a special surgeon, Dr. George D. Picetti, III, made possible a brighter future for Caleb.

Caleb is a special education student, who attends Franklin Elementary in Loomis. He lives in Roseville with his mother and father, Betsy and Daron Anderson and his brother and sister.

At birth, Caleb was diagnosed with an unspecified chromosome abnormality. "Every stage of development was a struggle for him," Betsy says.

He learned to walk when he was 4 years old. Today he is functioning well with the mental capacity of an 8-year-old, with a sweet and joyful disposition. When his mom noticed he started to resist walking and biking, she consulted his pediatrician who referred him to Picetti.

Picetti, a very modest man, explained how he had developed the endoscopic approach to spine surgery - a way to repair deformed spines with very small incisions - markedly different from the large,



PICO VAN HOUTRYVE/GRANITE BAY VIEW

Caleb Anderson rides a bike with mother Betsy. Caleb was diagnosed with scoliosis last summer. Since his operation, he stands 2 inches taller, has lost 13 pounds and walks a mile every day.

long incision scars down the back resulting from traditional methods. Picetti travels around the world teaching his techniques to other surgeons and performing surgeries of very

difficult cases.

He also donates his services to treating patients in the underserved areas of the world.

In May he is headed to Ukraine to perform work. And a young girl from Pakistan will be coming to Sacramento this summer for a surgery to be performed by him.

"Growing up I always knew I was going to be an orthope-

dic surgeon," he says.

"My dad was an orthopedic surgeon. It was the only thought in my head. It is a passion of mine."

According to Dr. Samuel F. Ciricillo, president of Sutter Neuroscience Medical Group, Picetti is a unique individual.

"He makes the kids laugh, at a time when they are facing

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a very scary and serious surgery,” Circillo says. “The endoscopic spine approach perfected by Picetti makes all the difference in the world to kids.”

Picetti joined Sutter in April 2006, which according to Circillo made Sutter’s neuroscience services complete.

“With Dr. Picetti on board, there is nothing we cannot provide our patients,” Circillo says.

While he does work on adults, the bulk of Picetti’s practice is pediatric. Picetti’s office walls are covered with letters and pictures of the children he has helped.

“The most challenging aspect of my job is the night before, thinking about every aspect of the procedure to make sure it will go smoothly,” Picetti says.

After each surgery, Picetti stays

near their bed until his patients wake up so he can reassure them that everything is OK. Each of Picetti’s patients have a special connection with this surgeon, who says, “I really enjoy being with the kids, joking with them and

taking time to explain so they can be more comfortable.”

He often receives invitations to graduations and weddings. He sees his patients grow into their lives with so much satisfaction of knowing he had a hand in helping improve their quality of life.

Since Picetti operated on Caleb’s back in December 2007, he stands 2 inches taller and has lost 13 pounds. Caleb and his mom now walk a mile everyday. And they both enjoy riding the tandem bike they share. Eternally grateful to Picetti, Caleb’s mother says her son is a different child.

When asked about the surgery, Caleb is excited.

“I love Dr. Picetti and I am proud of my back,” he says.



Dr. George Picetti holds a model of a vertebrae inside his Sacramento office. Though Picetti works on adults, the bulk of his practice is pediatric. Inset, an x-ray of Anderson’s spine after the surgery.

PICO VAN HOUTRYVE/
GRANITE BAY VIEW

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