

Ingalls cardiovascular specialist touches patients' hearts

Born with a hole in her heart, 62-year-old Anastasia Brueckheimer lived a normal life until she developed an aggressive case of bronchitis in early 2006. Weeks later, when she still had trouble catching her breath, she was referred to Ingalls cardiologist Francis Almeda, M.D.

"Dr. Almeda performed a battery of tests," she recalls. "After my cardiac catheterization, he and Dr. Lee informed me I needed heart surgery the next morning."

Dr. Bryan Lee, cardiovascular surgeon at Ingalls, completed the heart surgery on Brueckheimer, performing double-bypass surgery, closing the hole in her heart, repairing her damaged mitral valve and



Dr. Bryan Lee

completing a complex "maze" procedure to correct her abnormal heart rhythm, all in one marathon heart surgery.

"I can't praise Dr. Lee, Dr. Almeda and Ingalls Hospital enough," Anastasia said. "Before my surgery, my heartbeat was irregular and painful, and now I don't have any pain at all."

Just a few weeks after surgery, Brueckheimer is beginning cardiac rehabilitation at Ingalls, supplemented by walking 30 minutes a day.

"They did their job, now it's time to do mine," she says with a grateful smile.

When 54-year-old Carl Foster went to a Chicago hospital with chest pain in May, he expected doctors there would



Carl Foster and Anastasia Brueckheimer with Cardiac Rehab nurse Carol Spagnola

take care of the problem. With a history of several heart attacks and angioplasties, Foster assumed bypass surgery would be the recommendation. Instead, doctors sent him home, telling him surgery was too risky.

Foster sought the help of his sister, a cardiac nurse, who referred him to Angel Castaner, M.D., board-certified cardiologist on staff at Ingalls, and, ultimately, to Dr. Lee.

To his relief, Dr. Lee told Foster he could help. However, Foster's complicated condition required a combination of coronary artery bypass surgery to treat his blocked arteries and transmyocardial revascularization (TMR) to help alleviate his ongoing chest pain.

TMR is a relatively new treatment which uses a special laser to create small channels in the heart muscle, improving blood flow to the heart and relieving chest pain.

Foster underwent quadruple bypass surgery and TMR at Ingalls, and was recovering in the comfort of his sister's home a week later.

"I was so discouraged before I came to Ingalls. Dr. Castaner and Dr. Lee gave me a second chance, and I'm very grateful for it," Foster said.

For more information about Ingalls cardiology services, call Ingalls Care Connection at 800.221.2199. <