

CONNECTING YOUR COMMUNITY

JUNE 2021

SUMMIT+CHATHAM

LOCAL

Local Dad's
Journey to
Survive

Meet Mark Boyland

MARK BOYLAND

FAMILY NAMES:

Sonja, Christina, Danielle, Emily

PROFESSION: General Counsel, AeroFarms

PET: Brody

NEIGHBORHOOD: Hill Section, Chatham Township



Tell us about your family, where did you grow up?

North Caldwell, NJ. Single Mother and younger sister. Supportive grandparents.

How long have you been married, and how did you meet?

1989, married Newport RI. Met through a fraternity brother who was dating Sonja.

How long have you lived in Chatham? What brought you to town?

Moved in 1996. Was transitioning out of Department of Justice where I was a trial attorney, for a private sector law firm job in NYC.

What are some of the things you enjoy about Chatham?

Schools, town center vibe, easy access to hiking trails and coast, strong sense of community.

How are you involved in the Community?

Was coach, room parent, CCD teacher, other volunteering across three children and collectively 30 years of Chatham Education.

How have you survived during the Pandemic? Tell us your story.

Each of us got COVID early in the pandemic, and my wife Sonja – a Winston School educator - experienced a job loss as well. We became insular through the summer, focusing on family and keeping to the family shore house for activities like boating and fishing. In spite of challenges, one daughter succeeded in junior year at Villanova as a biochemistry/neuroscience major with A's, another daughter landed a highly coveted rotation at UPMC and became a Child Life Specialist, and our third got engaged, planned a wedding, and was married May 16 outside at the shore with all friends and family attending. Through this all, my wife was a constant source of patience, perspective and perseverance.

What can you tell the neighbors about the importance of keeping healthy?

I am the poster child for early detection. My physicals over the years yielded commentary such as “you have the fitness of a man half your age”. False praise for my lifting/swimming/running/dieting regime in that what lies beneath the surface is what will get you. A simple hand tremor and quick slur of speech, that passed in seconds, was the only indicator I had that something was wrong. Had my wife not seen and heard me, I'd have brushed it off and moved on. In spite of my overall health – heart, blood, eyesight, etc., that one sign was the result of a tumor. Had I not sought the care of medical professionals at AHS, I'm told I likely would have lost eyesight, sense of smell, and motor skills on the right side of my body. So, yeah, when something feels different, get checked out.



Mark's support group of friends and family has helped carry him through both the Pandemic and his treatment.

Local Dad's Journey to Survive

Chatham resident Mark Boyland went from brain tumor-induced seizures to white water sports in seven weeks.

“I don't have time for this.” That was the first thought that crossed Mark Boyland's mind when he was diagnosed with a skull base brain tumor. With a high-powered legal career, hobbies like waterskiing and paddle boarding, and an equally active family at home, it was hard for Mark to fathom slowing down.

Mark was used to having a clean bill of health and being the type of person who never even catches a cold. That started to change when he began experiencing episodes where he would zone out – which he learned later were seizures. In one instance, Mark was working at home and his wife, Sonja, noticed something was off. His typing came to a noticeable stop as his right arm cramped up, and when she asked if everything was ok, his speech was noticeably slurred.

Sonja insisted Mark get medical help and his three daughters agreed. At urgent care, the doctors told Mark he was hav-

ing a stroke. He went immediately to the ER, but they couldn't find any real symptoms of a stroke. It wasn't until he had an MRA scan – a special type of MRI – that a brain tumor, specifically a frontal lobe meningioma, became part of the discussion.

Mark's first call was to his Chatham neighbor Ronald Benitez, M.D. who is the chair of endovascular neurosurgery at Atlantic Health System's Overlook Medical Center and a neurosurgeon with Altair Health.

“I knew Ron personally but more importantly, I knew about the group's outstanding reputation,” notes Mark.

“I knew that I needed to see a brain surgeon, and I quickly learned there are many kinds of brain surgeons, just as there



Mark Boyland returned to his hobbies – white water sports – just seven weeks after brain surgery to remove a skull base tumor.



are lawyers, each of them specializing in treating different parts of the brain,” says Mark.

Dr. Benitez connected Mark with one of the leading brain tumor surgeons in New Jersey, Yaron A. Moshel, MD, PhD, who happens to also live in Chatham.

“There are a lot of uncertainties when it comes to brain tumors, but when a mass starts impinging on the brain and affecting someone’s life in any way, as in Mark’s case, it’s a telltale sign it needs to be removed,” explains Dr. Moshel, who also serves as co-director of Overlook Medical Center’s Gerald J. Glasser Brain Tumor Center.

“Dr. Moshel was not only incredibly knowledgeable and methodical, but also very empathetic. He’s the kind of guy everyone wants to be around,” explains Mark. “Still, I made it a point to get second opinions from some of the big-name hospitals in New York City. That’s what everyone’s told to do when they get news like this, so I did my rounds in Manhattan. Surprisingly, I was told to wait six months and see what happens.”

Two days later, Mark was presenting in front of a room full of colleagues when he became disoriented, started slurring his words and fading out. He excused himself, got in his car to head home and realized he no longer knew how to operate the vehicle.

It was clear treatment couldn’t wait. That’s when Mark returned to see Dr. Moshel.

“Dr. Moshel’s first instinct to remove the tumor as soon as possible was 100 percent right,” says Mark. “It was abundantly clear he had the specialized expertise that my situation called for and that he wouldn’t just treat me like a number.”



[From L]: Neurosurgeons, Ronald Benitez, MD and Yaron Moshel, MD, PhD at Overlook Medical Center

ment, Dr. Moshel performed a craniotomy, working through the base of the skull to access otherwise hard-to-reach areas of the brain without disturbing healthy tissue. He successfully removed the tumor, including unwrapping parts of the tumor from around Mark’s optical and olfactory nerves.

“Although the skull base approach sounds more aggressive than a traditional craniotomy, in reality, it is less invasive to the brain, which is what matters most. The skull base can be reconstructed; the brain cannot,” notes Dr. Moshel. “In fact, this technique was a key factor in allowing Mark to recover and get back to his regular life so quickly.”

Following a four-day hospital stay and a surprisingly short recovery, Mark was ready to spring back into action. He was cleared by occupational therapy and physical therapy on day one and returned to work just four weeks later. He was in such great mental and physical shape after the operation – which he credits in large part to Dr. Moshel’s skill – that he picked up skateboard land-paddling and surf-skiing just seven weeks after surgery and was back on the ocean in no time.

“The personalized care I received was simply outstanding,” adds Mark. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without it.”

“If Mark had waited to be treated, he could have reached the point of developing intractable epilepsy,” explains Dr. Moshel. “Additionally, if the tumor grew, it would have compressed his optic nerves, leading to vision loss, and affected his frontal lobes, which are important for high-level cognitive reasoning and are especially important for a lawyer.”

After walking Mark through various approaches for treat-

High-Tech ORs Transform Brain Surgery

BY DR. YARON MOSHEL

Advances in operating room technologies are transforming brain tumor surgery, empowering Atlantic Health System neurosurgeons to achieve outstanding outcomes when removing even the most complex tumors. Combining three-dimensional imaging, fluorescent imaging and a state-of-the-art microscope, we can successfully remove a patient’s entire tumor without harming brain function. The result is not just enhanced outcomes, it’s improved long-term prognoses.

This is significant as more than 700,000 people in the U.S. live with a primary brain tumor, and 84,000 will be diagnosed this year according to the National Brain Tumor Society. At the Gerald J. Glasser Brain Treatment Center at Overlook Medical Center and Morristown Medical Center, we treat more than 1,000 brain tumor patients annually. Half of our patients with malignant tumors have gliomas, the most difficult to treat.

Surgery to remove these tumors is complicated because gliomas don’t have clear biological boundaries. Something similar to a fog surrounds them. When these dense tumors infiltrate the brain, they often become intertwined with functional areas that control language, memory, motor and sensory skills. That intensifies the risks and challenges of removing them.

Here’s how technology is making a difference:

- We have moved from two-dimensional to three-dimensional imaging with stereotactic guidance. Using Medtronic’s Stealth Station S8 Surgical Navigation System – the most advanced stereotactic guidance available – multiple types of MRI scans, including functional scans that illuminate speech and motor centers, can be overlaid with three-dimensional images of the tumor. This imaging and GPS-like technology help identify the tumor’s boundaries and provide a precise surgical line of sight, enabling removal of the tumor in its entirety while minimizing any potential disturbance to other areas of the brain.
- We are leveraging fluorescent imaging. A few hours before surgery, patients swallow 5 ALA, a liquid solution that circulates throughout the body and causes a malignant tumor to glow bright pink. The tumor fluorescence – including the boundaries – is seen with a special microscope equipped with a highly specific blue light filter. We are one of the first providers in New Jersey to harness the power of fluorescent imaging for brain tumor care. We believe this fluorescent tracer will become the standard of care because of the immense advantage it provides in distinguishing malignant cells from healthy tissue.
- The newest microscope, the Zeiss Kinevo, incorporates fluorescent imaging and the Stealth Navigation 3D images, giving us every piece of information we need during surgery, including a “heads-up display.” Before this technology, we would

essentially look at a screen on our left displaying an MRI, then turn back to the operating table to apply what we saw on screen to the patient in front of us. This combination of technologies now allows us to see everything right in front of us and safely remove some of the most complex tumors in some of the most difficult-to-reach locations.

While there is no cure for gliomas, there are very effective post-surgical treatments including stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS), a radiation technique that delivers precisely aimed, highly focused beams of radiation to the designated target. The CyberKnife® system of SRS, which we use, administers radiotherapy with sub-millimeter accuracy, avoiding healthy tissue and reducing and potentially preventing any toxicity post-treatment. Patients are able to continue their normal activities and other treatment while receiving SRS. Oftentimes, SRS used in combination with other medical treatment can keep the tumor under control noninvasively.

These leading-edge technologies continue to advance what’s possible with brain tumor surgery. Additionally, Atlantic Health System is participating in national clinical trials – including a brain tumor vaccine trial and another trial using immunotherapy in combination with standard chemotherapy. We expect the results – like all of the advances we can now leverage – to be game changing.



Photo by Richard Thus

Dr. Moshel is co-director of the Gerald J. Glasser Brain Tumor Center at Atlantic Health System’s Overlook Medical Center and Morristown Medical Center and a board-certified neurosurgeon at Altair Health.

SUMMIT+CHATHAM LOCAL Offers “Bounce Back” Support to Local Businesses

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We appreciate and support the local business community and urge our neighbors to spend more locally!