



The Face of Westchester

# Dr. Stephen Johnson

*Remembering Where It All Began*

After switching high schools five times in four years, he gave up. “My parents were divorced and I was in the middle of a sad odyssey,” says Dr. Stephen Johnson. “Whenever I’d start to connect, it was time to move again.” His last move brought him to White Plains to stay with his aunt and uncle. That’s when, thanks to Westchester Community College, things began to change. “I was impressionable and it was a life-altering experience,” he says.

At the college, he gained his stride and began to get good grades, just as he had in grammar school. The small classes, personal attention, and faculty dedicated to teaching proved to be a winning combination.

“One of my professors asked us to keep a journal,” he recalls. “It seemed like a simple thing, but I can honestly say that this little assignment changed me forever. As I wrote down the story of my life, I was able to see things clearly for the first time. I began ‘directing’ myself and setting up the building blocks for my future.”

Through demanding courses including Chemistry, his interest in science and medicine began, and he started thinking about his next steps.

“There were a bunch of us who would study together and talk about what we wanted to do with our lives. Even back in the 1970’s, the library was outstanding and we would spend our time there after class, working together until it closed. Two of us went on to become doctors and one became a nurse,” he says.

His excellent grades were his ticket into Columbia University. He went on to earn his medical degree at the University of



Dr. Johnson has forged a successful career as a neurosurgeon and he credits the college with giving him the tools to succeed.

PHOTOS BY JEFF THIEBAUTH, SOUTH SHORE HOSPITAL

Pennsylvania, and now has a thriving neurosurgery practice in Massachusetts.

Recently, Dr. Johnson was asked to be the commencement speaker at an alternative high school in Massachusetts. He identified with the students who face their own distinct challenges. “I admire their drive and dedication. I told them it takes luck, skill, and above all else, confidence, to make it in this world,” he says. “I think they can do it,” he concludes. Those who know Dr. Stephen Johnson, neurosurgeon, know that it can be done.

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