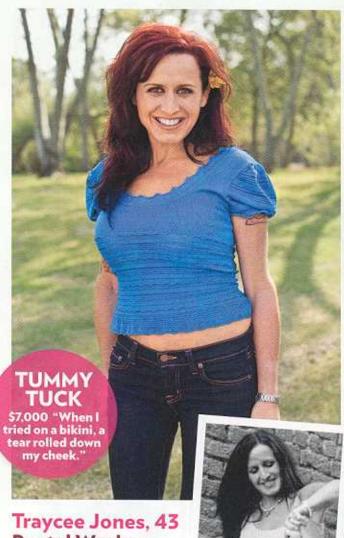


PLASTIC SURGERY FOR REAL PEOPLE

Think cosmetic surgery is just for the rich? Now more middle-class workers than millionaires go under the knife. Four tell why (and how) they paid for their procedures





Traycee Jones, 43 Postal Worker

After having "three 10-lb. babies" in 14 years, Jones grew so self-conscious. she wouldn't let even her husband, Chris, see her undressed. "I was living with a disfigured stomach.

loose skin and muscle damage," says the 5'1" Huntington Beach, Calif., resident. But an abdominoplasty (which removes excess skin and fat and tightens muscles) seemed out of reach on her part-time U.S. Postal Service salary of \$31,000. Chris, a flooring contractor, earns more, but most of it goes to their \$5,000 monthly mortgage payment. "We barely make it," says Jones. So with Chris's blessing, she says, "I got a credit card and charged it." Carrying a 9.9 percent interest rate, Jones will be paying for her February procedure (by Dr. Joseph Cruise) until 2010. To help, she says, "we gave up going out to dinner. And no more Nordstrom." Cutting back, she feels, was worth it. Recently, she and Chris were going home from the pool and stopped at a grocery store. Jones, in a bikini top and a miniskirt, told him, "'I can't go in like this,' and he said, 'So what? You're a hot mama!""

LaSaundra Stuckey, 41 Pennsylvania National Guard Army supply manager

Serving in Iraq last year, Stuckey lost a close friend. She realized, "I don't want to come to the end of my life and have regrets." The 5-ft, officer had long mulled a "mommy makeover" (her two sons are

now grown) and finally went for it. She sought a surgeon experienced with skin of color and found Philadelphia's Dr. Emily Pollard, who offered a 20 percent military discount. Stuckey pulls \$60,000 a year, but \$15,000 in hazardous duty pay covered the operation she calls "the best investment of my life. If you feel good about how you look, you'll perform better on every level."



