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THE STYLE ISSUE

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RENO  
MAGAZINE

## DR. LADAWN TALBOTT

Lessons from the runway and real life  
inspire this local plastic surgeon to  
embrace inner and outer beauty

# MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

DR. LADAWN TALBOTT TALKS FAMILY, MODELING, PLASTIC SURGERY AND HOW SHE BALANCES THE THREE

BY MIKALEE BYERMAN | PHOTOS BY RICHARD STOKES

**T**HE PLUSH WAITING AREA of Dr. LaDawn Talbott's office is bathed in angelic ivory and dramatic ebony tones, a stark contrast further reinforced by the images on the Panasonic flat-screen gracing a wall. Today, Guy Fieri is on the Food Network, submerging a swollen pig's head in a vat of water — in preparation for making a batch of head cheese.

But the alarmingly dichotomous image is supplanted with a quick glance around the room, as pictures of perfectly sculpted bodies and faces are reflected on literature adorning every table. Soon, the statuesque Dr. LaDawn Talbott, cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgeon, mother of four and grandmother of one, rounds the corner.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," she says, leading me down the hall to her private office at the rear of the space, gliding along the carpet as though she's modeling the latest glam trends during fashion week.

The comparison, it turns out, is a fitting one. Dr. Talbott has a storied history, one that includes time spent in New York as a high-fashion runway model.

"But I always wanted to be a doctor," Dr. Talbott says. She won a model search at the age of 15, opening the door to working with agencies like Wilhelmina and Ford Models. This time, she says, was simply a means to an end — a way to fund medical school — during which she undertook two residencies: one in general surgery, one in

**WAVING BEAUTY**  
Adrianna Pappel beaded gown, \$278, and Anna & Ava necklace, \$58, from Dillard's.



**BRIGHT LIGHTS**  
Adrianna Papell long sleeve lace dress, \$160, and Vince Camuto shoe, \$148, from Dillard's. Earrings, \$9.99, necklaces, \$14.99, each from Charming Charlie. *Opposite page:* BCBG one-shoulder dress, \$338, from Dillard's. Necklace, \$228, bracelet, \$98, and earrings, \$58, from JCrew.

### MIRROR, MIRROR

“When I was younger working as a model, there were a couple of times I felt I wasn’t treated as a person,” she says of her decision to eschew modeling for medicine. “I was an object, a commodity. I knew I couldn’t make a career of it. But that time has helped me in my career, because at a very basic level, I’m here to make patients feel good about themselves.

“Yet it’s not about being someone else to please other people,” she adds. “I hope they do it for themselves. I want every one of my patients to look in the mirror, to feel good, to feel confident.”

There was a time when Talbott didn’t feel such confidence. She was first married at a young age, a union that ended when her physically abusive husband left her and their two children.

“There’s a panic that goes on in that kind of situation,” she recalls. “How am I going to make ends meet on my own? How will I pay for daycare? Becoming a single parent was a defining moment for me. I had to find strength and change my mindset. I had to find the confidence that I could do this on my own.”

For Dr. Talbott, while her sense of self persisted, being alone was short lived. She entered medical school single with two children; she left married with four.

“Yeah, it was a busy time,” she laughs, noting she married husband Greg Talbott in her second year of medical school. “He was instrumental in helping me get through it all. He’s a phenomenal father who was always there for my children. But all along, I was hoping to find a medical specialty that was also family friendly.”

Surgery, it turns out, was not.

“But if you love what you’re doing, it makes all the difference,” she says, pointing out that the plastics specialty marries her two contrasting personas.

### AN EYE FOR BEAUTY

“I’m an artist, but I’m also a scientist,” she says, leaning back in her chair, one precise surgeon’s hand resting delicately along an ornately swirled gold-cuff encircling her upper arm. “One of the things I love about plastic surgery is that you never have the same operation twice, because no two patients are alike; you have to tailor the operation to the person’s needs in a very artistic way.”

Her skill, she notes, was developed thanks to support from her inspirational parents — who also helped her care for her children while she was single — and a few mentors.

One such mentor: Dr. Charles Virden, another

reconstructive and plastic surgeon in Reno who shared office space with Dr. Talbott when she first came to town.

“I loved her backstory,” he recalls. “I always like the underdog, and seeing this clearly beautiful woman who was so driven and had overcome such adversity, I was completely charmed.”

In fact, he was instrumental in helping Dr. Talbott make the decision to relocate to Reno from South Carolina, where she was living with her second husband and four children. Husband Greg grew up in the area, graduating from Manogue Catholic High School in 1985.

“We wanted to be closer to his side of the family, we wanted a place with four seasons, we wanted to be close to water without humidity,” she says. “We absolutely love Reno.

“I even learned to ski and snowboard here — in fact, I was a grandmother when I learned how to ski,” she adds with a chuckle, her mane of unruly raven hair pulsing with each breath.

Her passion for life is one of her most attractive traits, Greg says.

“She’s up for anything,” he says with a laugh. “She has this complete and total passion for her craft, and then outside of her job, she steps out there and lives this amazing life. It’s really beautiful.”



### HOUSE CALLS

For the couple, much of their together time is spent in the basement. As visitors descend the stairs of their two-story home, they’re greeted by notes from a Blue Oyster Cult or Nirvana song — with a special Talbott family flair.

“Yeah, we have a family band,” LaDawn admits almost sheepishly. Her son Zane, 12 and attending

Swope Middle School, plays drums; another son Payton, 14 and a freshman at Manogue, plays bass. Greg plays guitar, and LaDawn plays keyboard and is the vocalist.

Dr. Talbott’s other son, 23, is applying to medical school at the University of Nevada; her daughter, 21, relocated to Los Angeles this year to pursue a career in acting and modeling.

“It’s fulfilling to see your children inspired by your life,” she says. “They’re all so talented in their own right.”

And LaDawn’s talents come to fruition both at home in the band room, on runways in locales like Reno and San Francisco where she still occasionally models, and at work in the operating room.

“One of the important things about plastic surgery is having an eye for beauty,” she says. “My background as a model definitely helps, as it’s imperative to have an artful eye — to be able to look at fine detail and to be able to define and create beauty.”