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MOUNT PLEASANT FIRE CHIEF'S KNEE PAIN GOES UP IN SMOKE THANKS TO EXCELA HEALTH ORTHOPEDICS, REHABILITATION

MOUNT PLEASANT, PA, October 4, 2013 ... Jerry Lucia spends his day putting out fires – some send the longtime fire chief racing to the scene of the raging inferno, others smolder as yet unresolved issues before the venerable mayor of Mount Pleasant Borough, and there's the occasional flare-up within the business he manages.

When the fiery pain in his knee was more than he could stand, Lucia momentarily stepped away from his considerable responsibilities into the capable hands of Excela Health orthopedic surgeon Daniel Haffner, MD, and the physical therapy team at Frick Hospital.

Lucia had been forestalling the inevitable joint replacement until x-rays revealed the level of degeneration was beyond relief from injections or rehab.

"When I met with Dr. Haffner, I told him to pick the time and place and I'd be there." July 8 Lucia had joint replacement surgery at Westmoreland Hospital, and two weeks later he was directing a fire call – albeit from a chair, instead of the cab of a fire engine. The follow-up regimen of physical therapy also meant he moved easily from a walker to a cane within the month, just in time to officiate at a wedding ceremony – an example of the myriad public appearances a mayor makes.

"I didn't want to step out of dedicated service so I'm so pleased the recovery went so well. My family knows service is my life. In my 28 years of elected office, I've only missed three public meetings of borough council, and one of them was my surgery," he shared proudly.

While 38 years as a firefighter - 23 as chief - have taken a physical toll on Lucia,

he acknowledges younger days on the basketball court were a contributing factor.

Hoping to prolong the life of his new joint, the 68-year-old married father of three sons falls within the national norm for knee replacement. "I'm hoping for at least 20 good years on my new knee. I have three grandchildren in their teens and expect to be active in their lives."

To learn more about options for orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation services visit www.excelahealth.org.