

Senior Avery Massaro shares their journey of transitioning and having top surgery

By Maggie Armstrong

The room is silent except for the dull sounds of shoes squeaking and wheels of beds scuffing on the light-reflecting hospital floors outside. There is a faint scent of linen and cleaning supplies that pulls senior Avery Massaro back into reality, clearing their confusion from the hours of surgery.

It is the day after their 18th birthday.

Massaro finds their bearings after glancing around the room and finding their mom, Ann Massaro, looking on with tear-filled eyes. Hesitantly, Massaro looks down at themselves: their legs are snug under the hospital blanket and their chest is wrapped with bandages.

A smile spreads across Massaro's face with this observation. Their chest is wrapped, but it is also flat.

The surgery was a success.

Ann Massaro rushes over to her child, eager for Massaro to absorb this success and react. When Massaro looks into their mom's awaiting face, they start to cry. Their tears paint the bandages with splotches of joy.

For Avery Massaro, this top surgery means the world.

"That was the best moment I think I've ever felt," Massaro said. "I can finally start living my life how I'm supposed to be."

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Massaro has planned on getting top surgery done since their freshman year of high school. The moment they wore their first binder, they knew that it was going to be a long four years

before they could permanently change their appearance, but they would wait.

"Avery is determined and driven, and I really admire that," Ann Massaro said. "They also educated themselves every step of the journey, and it really impressed me that they wanted to be so informed."

Since their decision freshman year, Massaro has made more minor changes to gradually feel more comfortable and confident with themselves. They cut their hair short- something they had wanted to do since fifth grade- and started taking testosterone. Last year, Massaro was also able to legally change their name.

"I'm diagnosed with gender dysphoria," Massaro said. "So, the surgery is basically to alleviate that, and the amount of happiness I felt from it was mind-boggling."

Throughout this process, Massaro's parents were supportive, and Massaro's relationship with their dad only strengthened. However, in 2022, Massaro's dad passed away suddenly.

"I had to learn to be okay without a parent," Massaro said. "It made me more sensitive to stuff, and I felt drained so much faster. But from his death, I did get money, which was how I was able to afford top surgery."

Even after his passing, Massaro's dad was with them every step of their journey, and Ann Massaro supported Massaro for both of them.

"She has been my biggest supporter," Massaro said. "She was taking care of me when I couldn't really move after the surgery."

Since the surgery, Massaro's friends and family have been able to watch them grow into their true self and finally feel comfortable in their skin.

"I'm so proud of Avery and who they are becoming," Ann Massaro said. "Since surgery, it's like I see Avery coming into their true identity, and I'm honored to get to be a part of that journey."

Top surgery has also given Massaro the chance to explore their style and feel comfortable in what they wear.

"I feel like outfits have been a big thing for Avery," senior Isabel Her-

nandez said. "Before, they tried to wear more baggy clothes, but I can really see them find their style and be able to express themselves more."

Hernandez and Massaro have known each other since kindergarten, and despite over a decade of growth and change, Massaro continues to impact Hernandez's life for the better.

"I can remember Avery in kindergarten just being the sweetest person," Hernandez said. "Very non-judgmental and somebody you can always talk to."

Any person who gets to know Massaro learns quickly that they are a strong, caring, and determined person. Through every obstacle, Massaro has persevered and grown, and they have consequently taught their family and friends various lessons.

Massaro has taught their mom the power and importance of being supportive.

"I would tell other parents that the same little person they loved and raised is still that person now," Ann Massaro said. "No matter a change in name or physical appearance, the things you love about your child are still there."

Massaro has taught their friends and peers that understanding what Massaro is going through is less important than just being there for them.

"You don't need to understand, you just need to be there," Hernandez said. "It's not your job to understand. It's just your job to support your loved ones and love them no matter what."

For the longest time, Massaro has not felt comfortable in their skin, but after years of continued support from friends and family and consistent dedication, Massaro can finally be themselves.

They can wear the clothes they want to without worrying about how it looks, they can meet new people and introduce themselves with their legal name and new confidence, and they can continue to inspire others to take the time to find themselves.

"Just be true to yourself," Massaro said. "Don't try to fit yourself in someone else's category."

New look, same inspiring person



Senior Avery Massaro spends the rest of their high school career feeling confident.

L. Cascone