

In June 2016, shortly after my 60th birthday, I decided I'd had enough of feeling tired and bloated and losing and gaining ten pounds over and over. The Ninilchik Traditional Council had recently incorporated a new fitness and health program called WRAP (Weight Reduction Assistance Program) and I decided it might just be the jumpstart I needed. The program has several components and four awesome and wonderful health professionals to guide and encourage - Program creator Carrie Warren (Family Nurse Practitioner), Lisa Zatz (Health Coach), Tammy Zweicher (Certified Personal Trainer), and Shanna (Moeder) McGrath (Registered Dietician). I was already working out with Tammy Zweicher a couple times a week had participated in boot camps, but was not disciplined or motivated enough to work out beyond that and my eating and lifestyle habits needed serious changes. WRAP is the only medically supervised weight loss program of its kind on the Kenai Peninsula.

A thorough physical which included bloodwork was my first step followed by a metabolic test which gave me a nice printout of my metabolic rate compared to others my age as well as the necessary caloric intake for weight loss. Pictures and measurements were taken and I was given a binder in which to store information, keep a food journal, keep track of exercise, and keep records of all my medical info (which is copied and placed in the binder after each visit with each professional).

I met with Lisa who helped me write specific and measureable goals and objectives that were realistic and achievable so I could experience small successes and stay motivated to continue. The time frame for the program is six months (but an extension can be granted as needed).

I met with Lisa often during the first couple of months until she told me that I was adhering to my goals well enough that I could choose to come in when I needed to. We discussed successes, challenges and new approaches for continued success. Shanna taught me about meal planning and introduced me to Myplate.gov. We discussed recipes, healthy food exchanges, and ways to break the cycle of unhealthy habits. One surprising thing I learned is that turkey bacon (one of my staples) has a lot of additives that aren't healthy and she advised to just eat the real thing when I craved it, but limit myself to one or two pieces. I uploaded the Fooducate app to learn the ingredients of foods I ate which led to me looking for other apps that were helpful in keeping me on track. Shanna also encouraged me to add vegetables to my morning meal...something I'd never really thought of.

I began walking four days a week in addition to the two days of Personal Training with Tammy Zweicher, and I used the Pacer app to record time, miles and calories burned. We ended up with a small walking group which helped keep us all motivated and it was fun. Not everyone could come all the time and we ended up changing our meeting places and times throughout the summer and fall to try to accommodate each other as much as possible. Our walks ranged from 3 miles to 6. If nobody could make it, I walked alone. When winter arrived, it was harder to motivate myself to get to the gym as I simply would rather walk outside than walk on a treadmill. I faced challenges such as vacations and either Tammy or myself being away for other

obligations, but by that time, I knew what to do to keep the weight off. Even if I couldn't do formal exercise given the circumstances, I stuck to my healthy meal plan.

I didn't overwhelm myself by making changes all at once, as I knew from experience that could sabotage my success. Some of the healthy changes I've made include switching to coconut milk in my coffee, adding coconut oil and avocado oils for cooking and baking to my oil repertoire, switching to Bragg's organic products like Nutritional Yeast and Liquid Aminos as flavor enhancers (instead of salty soy sauce and parmesan cheese for example). I ordered some Coconut Palm sugar on Amazon and use it for coffee and baking. Healthy recipes I have tried and like include bean burgers, bean brownies, bean, corn and rice pasta instead of white flour noodles, alfredo sauce made from cauliflower and cottage cheese to make cheesecake. I've experimented with baking gluten free breads from scratch. I am not gluten free...I am just trying to avoid white flour. I discovered that Three Bears and Walmart carry a huge variety of delicious gluten free products, including chips and crackers and plenty of baking mixes. Fred Meyers carries black bean chips in their organic section which are amazingly delicious and filling so I eat less. Hummus is a favorite of mine and I make it from scratch to save money but I recently discovered a much easier method. At Three Bears they have packages of hummus mix that you just blend up with chickpeas or beans. I still allow myself to indulge in sweets occasionally but if it's a big piece of cake, I just take a few bites. At mealtime, when I feel full, I have learned to push my plate away. To keep my water intake high, I drink from a water container that appeals to me which is a large mason jar. I love nuts so I switched to salt free mixed nuts.

Like many of you, I've tried different diets over the years and always gained the pounds back. The WRAP program isn't a diet; it's a lifestyle change. I have five grandkids and one on the way and I want to be healthy for them so I can hopefully be around a good long time. This program has turned my life around and given me the tools I need to finally lose the belly and feel good about how I look. I also take a daily 1MD probiotic. I encourage anyone who wants to lose weight and change bad habits to give the WRAP program a try. Just take that first step and make an appointment for a consultation. In six short months you'll be happy you did. It's free for tribal members but if you're not a tribal member and think the cost is too high, there's a payment plan option. The membership fee for the Health Club is far below what most health clubs charge. It's worth the money because in the long run - the healthy changes you make will last a lifetime and perhaps even save your life. What is your health worth to you? If you think it's too much of a time commitment meeting with the four professionals, please know that they are there to help, teach, encourage. The journey is yours alone and the effort you put into it is up to you. Go at your own pace. The six months is just a starting point to help you learn how to be healthy for the rest of your life.