Healthy Living

Health scare motivates weight loss

Move 2 Lose program, family support helps woman drop 90 pounds.

By Alexis Larsen
Contributing Writer

Like so many others before her, it was a health scare that led Gayle Horton to begin her weight-loss journey.

Horton, senior executive director for the YMCA of Greater Dayton, went to her doctor for a routine checkup only to discover she had elevated cholesterol. She didn’t take the news or the prescription for medication that went with it well.

“When that doctor told me I had high cholesterol, it didn’t scare me,” she said. Instead, it angered her.

Next came the weight loss, which was far more dramatic than most.

In January 2008, Horton weighed in at 234 pounds — 42 percent of that body fat on her 5’5” frame. By December 2008, a very determined, disciplined Horton had thinned down to 144 pounds — just 17 percent body fat.

Horton, 43, credits many things with her incredible success and ability to maintain it. Her will, support from friends and family — including husband Marvin and kids, Abby, 15, and Andrew, 12 — a regimented diet and lots and lots of exercise. She currently works out six to seven days a week doing a variety of workouts that burn 1,000 calories at a time.

The YMCA’s Move 2 Lose weight loss program that Horton began in early 2008 also played a major role in getting her moving in the right direction, she said. The program, which offers personal training in small groups twice a week with a certified personal trainer (24 sessions total), helped to serve as a reminder that she was supposed to work out.

Gayle Horton weighed 234 pounds in 2008. With the support from friends and family, a regimented diet and the YMCA’s Move 2 Lose weight loss program, she lost 90 pounds.

10 tips for weight loss

According to Gayle Horton, losing weight and keeping it off takes a lifestyle change. “We eat to feel warm or to feel safe. Now I eat to live,” says Horton, who added she hasn’t been in a food coma since 2008. Here are some of her suggestions for getting and staying healthy:

1. Eat breakfast
2. Don’t skip meals
3. Eat a salad every day
4. Count your calories
5. Don’t cheat
6. Stop eating fast food
7. Cut out fried foods
8. Incorporate fruits and vegetables into every meal
9. Schedule workouts on the calendar
10. Keep a food journal

“For the level of trainer you have and the level of commitment you get, you can’t beat it. ... I would have never been able to have an individual personal trainer like that without (Move 2 Lose),” Horton said.

The Move 2 Lose program began as a pilot program at the Huber Heights YMCA in January 2008 and was eventually rolled out to all Dayton YMCA locations the next year, said Jackie Brockman, associate executive director at the Trotwood YMCA Neighborhood Development Center and head of the YMCA of Greater Dayton’s Health and Wellness Task Team.

Since 2009, the association-wide Move 2 Lose program that’s held once a year during winter has engaged 1,617 participants at 11 local YMCA locations resulting in a whopping weight loss of 10,985 pounds across Dayton, Brockman said. Following the winter session, each individual YMCA then goes on to offer one or two more sessions throughout the year.

Horton says she started with Move 2 Lose at the beginning of 2008 and has completed three sessions since.

“It’s really hard — everyone lives so fast. They don’t think about what they’re doing and take the quick and easy route,” says Horton, who believes individual one-on-one attention from a trainer and closely monitoring food is key to getting into shape and staying healthy.

Horton says that involving her family in her weight-loss journey through diet and exercise has also been key. “For me as a mom I always felt so guilty. I work all day, and then I’m taking an hour to work out.”

By involving her family, she says it became an important part of everyone’s lifestyle — not just hers. Because everyone was participating, she didn’t feel guilty about taking time out.

Horton ran her first marathon in September 2008 and the rest of her family followed closely behind.

Now instead of having a feast to celebrate the holidays her family participates in races together. “As a family we all finish together,” she said.

Horton is happy to say she’s not on any medication currently and has no plans to be going forward. Her real goal is to feel healthy — something that isn’t always as easy as it sounds.

“It’s hard. I weigh what I weigh, and I fight it every day,” she said.

More on Move 2 Lose

The first program session begins this week and runs through April 28. Fees are: $115 for YMCA members and $150 for nonmembers. Financial assistance is available for those who qualify. Register at any Dayton YMCA location or visit www.YMCAonline.org. Each time slot is capped at a specific number. The registration for winter has ended, but call to find out about other programs being offered and to get dates for the spring Move 2 Lose session.

Participating local branches of the YMCA of Greater Dayton

Beaver Creek YMCA: 560 Grange Hall Road, Beaver Creek, (937) 426-9622 or email beavercreekinfo@daytonymca.org

Coffman YMCA (Springboro): 88 Remick Blvd., Springboro, (937) 886-9622 or email coffmaninfo@daytonymca.org

Downtown YMCA: 316 N. Wilkinson St., Dayton, (937) 228-9622, email downtowninfo@daytonymca.org

Fairborn YMCA: 300 S. Central Ave., Fairborn, (937) 754-9622 or email fairborninfo@daytonymca.org

Huber Heights YMCA: 7551 Shull Road, Huber Heights, (937) 236-9622 or email info@daytonymca.org

Kleptz YMCA (Englewood): 1200 W. National Road, P.O. Box 38, Englewood, (937) 836-9622 or email kleptzinfo@daytonymca.org

Preble County YMCA ( Eaton): 450 Washington-Jackson Road, Eaton, (937) 472-2010 or email prebleinfo@daytonymca.org

South YMCA (Kettering): 4545 Marshall Road, Kettering, (937) 434-1964 or email southinfo@daytonymca.org

West Carrollton YMCA: 900 S. Alex Road, West Carrollton, (937) 866-9622 or email westcarrolltoninfo@daytonymca.org

Xenia YMCA: 135 E. Church St., Xenia, (937) 376-9622 or email xeniainfo@daytonymca.org

YMCA Neighborhood Development Center — Trotwood: 506 East Main St., Trotwood, (937) 854-9622