

January/February 2014 Newsletter



Meet Michael, the marathon man

Michael had always struggled with his weight. No matter how hard he tried, with exercise and what he thought was a careful diet, he couldn't break the 200-pound barrier. Then one day in 2010, his sister asked him to run a half marathon with her. Michael hadn't run a half marathon in a long time but agreed to give it a try. "I thought she would slow me down but she beat me by ten minutes!" The next month they decided to run the Columbia Gorge Half Marathon, and Michael *really* kicked up the exercise, fitting in 1½ hours of exercise each day – running, swimming, biking, and working out at the gym – yet after two months he had only lost ten pounds, and his weight was still dangerously high.

It was back in August of that year that a naturopath with the Providence Integrative Medicine Program, Loch Chandler, was invited to speak at the company where Michael worked. Dr. Chandler talked about the role of a healthy diet and lifestyle to lose weight and reduce risks of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Michael remembers, "What appealed to me was the natural approach – and the fact that there was nothing in his talk about 'weight loss made easy.' If weight loss was easy, we'd all be thin!"

Michael met with Dr. Chandler in December. "I told him how hard I had been working for the last few months without getting anywhere, and he said, 'well, stop eating junk!' He gave me a copy of *Good Food, Great Medicine* and I read it that weekend."

And the winner is...

Michael began to rethink his diet and apply the principles he learned in the book. He stopped eating out, cut out refined carbohydrates, and started preparing his own food. He lost the remaining forty pounds and broke through the 200-pound barrier, not only reaching his original goal weight but passing it by seven pounds! More than three years later, the weight has stayed off.

"What people often forget is that they may lose weight, but the challenge is keeping it off. You have to change. I would lose weight and then gain it back, but I was always focusing on exercise, not food – even though I was actually eating a bad diet. I've learned that you can't exercise off a poor diet. Today I still eat the same as when I started on the diet. It's my lifestyle. I like the results, and have never felt deprived since I changed."

Says Dr. Chandler, "I tell everyone, 'this is what you're going to need to do – eat well and exercise. *You can't keep doing what you're doing and expect different results!*' I could talk to 100 people, and maybe less than five would do what Michael has done and make the sacrifices that he has made. I use the word 'sacrifice' because we all like easy and fast, and to go outside of that, especially to take away food we love – well, it's a sacrifice."

Since losing his weight, Michael has run over 36 half marathons and eight marathons (yes, you read that right – 44 races in 36 months!) including the Boston marathon in 2013. Pretty good for a guy who used to get winded just walking up stairs!



Michael is standing between Dr. Chandler and Dr. Hassell. For a man who didn't cook, his do-it-yourself health plan is one we could all consider signing up for. (Marathons optional!)



Michael's kitchen strategy; three years ago he began preparing meals for the whole week at one time, reducing both time spent in the kitchen and the temptation to eat out.

You don't need to run a marathon!

Many of us can identify with Michael's battle to lose weight, and even if running a marathon is probably not the first idea that would pop into most of our heads, some kind of goal is a good idea. All of us do better with goals than without them. Happily, they come in every size; here are a few samples.

Three simple goals

These examples turn up on just about every list of health tips ever written, but there is a reason for that. They are good advice – simple and DOABLE.

- **Take the stairs.** Take them anywhere you find them. Even one flight of stairs is a useful goal, and escalators count if you climb instead of ride. If you're heading for the fourth floor of an office building, climb at least one or two of the floors. *Tip:* if you pause on the landings to allow thigh muscles and lungs five seconds to recover, it is surprising how many flights you can push through.
- **Walk the walk.** There is nothing dramatic about walking – it's the usual way to get around. The goal is *extra* walking, whether you integrate the extra walking into your normal routine or add a walk around the block to the end of your day. *Tip:* it helps if you consciously build extra time allowances into your day to avoid the predictable I-don't-have-time-for-this mentality.
- **Plan ahead.** Follow Michael's example by making your food decisions as important as daily exercise. Keep it simple and sustainable.

Health insurance or health care?

There's a lot of uncertainty about the changes the coming year will bring to health care. Rather than fret about factors we can't change, let's focus on things we can – starting with our own health. We don't even need to log on to a website! (However, if

you would like some practical resources, we can recommend www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com. Just click on the *resources* tab.) Meanwhile, here are seven simple steps:

A seven-point health care plan

1. **Begin the day with high quality protein, good fat, and a serving of vegetables and/or whole fruit.** People who eat a good breakfast have better school and work performance and an easier time maintaining or losing weight.
2. **Fix your own food.** Pack your own lunch, keep good snacks handy, and aim to include nine servings of vegetables and whole fruit daily.
3. **Minimize refined grains** such as white rice, crackers, and anything made with white flour.
4. **Extract your sweet tooth.** Avoid added sugar, natural and artificial. Read ingredient lists!
5. **Sidestep liquid calories.** Juices, sweet drinks, and excess alcohol are major causes of weight gain, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.
6. **Make a habit of daily exercise,** even if it's only for 10 or 20 minutes. Here in Oregon there's no bad weather – just bad gear.
7. **Sleep is a nutrient.** Poor sleep (less than seven hours) is associated with obesity, type 2 diabetes, increased coronary calcification, depression, and decreased immunity.

Dr. Hassell's – speaking events

- 1/6/2014 – OHSU Nutrition Elective:** *Nutrition in the Primary Care Setting*; Portland, OR. For OHSU medical students.
- 1/8/2014 – Providence RN Call Center:** *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Health Care Crisis: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Portland, OR.
- 2/13/2014 – Providence Medical Group Nurse Quality Committee:** *Ischemic Heart Disease and Stroke: Which Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Portland, OR.
- 2/20/2014 – Mercy Medical Center:** *Choosing Good Health: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Roseburg, OR.
- 3/1/2014 – KOMEN Breast Cancer Issues Conference:** *Sugar, Soy, Alcohol and Breast Cancer: Understanding Their Relationship*; Portland, OR. For registration information: www.komenoregon.org
- 3/12/2014 – Multiple Myeloma support group:** *Lifestyle's Role in Cancer Survivorship*; Portland, OR.
- 4/7-4/8/2014 – Advanced Cardiovascular Nursing Symposium:** *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Health Care Crisis: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Portland, OR.
- 4/26/2014 – Oregon Blood Cancer Conference:** *Lifestyle's Role in Cancer Survivorship*; Portland, OR. For registration information: www.lls.org/oswim

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)