

# Andy drops 15 pounds In three weeks of *Ready Sweat Go!*

The Press is following Glen St. Mary resident Andy Johnston on his 10-week journey to lose weight through the YMCA's pilot diet and exercise program *Ready Sweat Go!* Mr. Johnston, owner of the Badcock furniture store in Macclenny, also serves on the YMCA's board of directors. What follows is his first-person account after three weeks in the new program and how it's affected his day-to-day life.



Andy Johnston

Starting something new is at once exciting, and intimidating.

That's how it was for my first week in our YMCA's *Ready Sweat Go* program. The workouts were challenging and interesting. My first six days went by in a blur of activity and sweat. Monday morning of week two is when I hit the wall — hard!

The wall is a special place you reach when you've pushed your body to the brink of its physical limitations. Your brain says go, but your body says no.

If I didn't have a commitment to get up and work out early Monday, I definitely would have stayed in bed and slept. Talking to my workout partner Monday, he said the same thing. Getting up an hour and a half early wasn't that difficult, going to sleep two hours early still is.

Knowing I wasn't alone at the wall helped immensely. Talking to my fellow classmates, many felt the same.

An important part of the program is every Tuesday night we are instructed on diet and nutrition. What I found interesting is they didn't tell us to eat less, or to eat a specific diet such as the Atkins or Nutrisystem.

What Marcy told us is we have to eat more to lose weight. Eat more? Obviously she hasn't seen me at an all-you-can-eat buffet getting mine and the next guy's money worth. Then she clarified what she meant by saying what my wife Lori always says, "You should be eating 4-5 times a day in smaller portions." We learned that by eating only once or twice a day we're telling our body that food is scarce. This causes our bodies to store up fat to prepare for the coming famine.

Excuses were made by a few people in group, such as, "I'm too busy to eat." I might get busy, but too busy to eat? Our second week weigh-in showed me that those who are eating or drinking

breakfast are losing weight; those who are not, aren't.

During the weighs-in, I've gotten lots of outside advice on what diet I should do. Everyone seems to have tried or knows somebody who lost weight on one of the fad diets. The problem with these diets is not losing weight; it's gaining all that weight and then some back when you stop the diet.

That's why I'm trying to eat smart, and eat food I like. For example, I love the Body by Vi smoothies with all the fruit and juice combinations. I made one for my daughter without the Body by Vi powder; not so great. I'm keeping mine the way they are.

Lunch is getting easier, a salad from Zaxby's, a sub from Subway, a chicken sandwich instead of a burger and fries.

I'm trying to get used to portion control and snacking in between meals. My wife picked up some almonds, fruit, and trail mix packages to use for snacks. I'm going to the local farmer's market to get some more fresh fruit and veggies. We went out to eat on Saturday, and with a little menu surfing I found an excellent healthy meal. Now if I can only get control of the midnight snacks, I'm good.

## Giving Back

Since this program is being offered to the public free of charge, YMCA director Jim Bouldin asked us to get pledges to help raise money for the next group, and to help our Strong Kids Program. The YMCA never turns away people because of their inability to pay. I just want to thank all the people in Baker County, the First Coast YMCA, and the officers and fellow owners of the Badcock Corporation who had the misfortune of being in my phone. They pledged a total \$135 for each pound I lose, and every dollar goes right here for the children of Baker County. The night my wife Lori pledged she went out to McDonalds and picked up Mcflurries and cones for everybody. But I stood strong, no ice cream for me. What's next, carrot cake? I smell a conspiracy. Thank goodness for my Vi smoothies. Call me at Badcock with any great recipe ideas.

## Drill Sergeant Michelle

Some of you may know that the YMCA was closed during our third week for a major face-lift. Walls are coming down, new equipment with televisions brought in, and the like. I foolishly hoped that we'd get the week

off, too. Hardly! Michelle has Cecil and I running suicide drills on the pool deck, doing pushups and sit-ups until we are rolling around crying. When we can't do another pushup, she screams take a lap, run, or worse, skip a lap around the pool.

My first-grader Hannah is there running and skipping circles around us giggling. I'm gasping for breath, and Hannah says, "Let's do it again, that was fun!" Fun is fishing or golfing. Youth is definitely wasted on the young. She thinks kite flying is all about running with only six feet of kite string out. Just wait until swim team practice this week. I'll show her fun.

Our group teenagers are devious. Tyler asked me if I would do the 5K with him and Jessica at the end of the program. Clueless, I said yes. I later was informed they planned to run, not walk, the entire distance. I get tired just thinking about running that far.

## Progress So Far

All my griping doesn't hide the fact that the program and diet changes are working. After the first three weeks I've lost 15 pounds. Every pound I lose means another child can play sports or go a couple of weeks to day camp. Talk about motivation.

My snug pants fit better and my wife says I'm losing some of my gut. I can't say my energy is better yet. I still need to go to sleep a little earlier.

I will say that I have been looking forward to my off-day workouts, and my aches and pains are much less. This program is all about changing our lives; I don't want to look back in a few years and play the "could-a, should-a, would-a game."

# Plant clinic

Baker County master gardeners will hold a plant clinic in the Macclenny Walmart garden center this Saturday, May 1 from 9:00 am to noon.

Stop by their booth to have your gardening questions answered, problems solved or just to pick up free helpful information. The gardeners will also be giving away free goodie bags with helpful information on ways to save water, and will be happy to share their experiences with you regarding the Baker County master gardener program.

Contact the Baker County Extension Office at 259-3520 for more information.