

The "Get Fit Fennimore" Story

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When the Get Fit Fennimore competition began shortly after New Year's resolution season, 215 people signed up to participate. Now, just 17 weeks and nine weigh-ins later, about 60-70 percent of those who started have finished and four big winners, or "losers" as TV's "Biggest Loser" calls them, have been named. As a community, Fennimore lost more than one ton, weighing in on the final evening (Monday) at 2,120 pounds less.

Vince Jeardeau lost a total of 67.75 pounds and 26.260 percent of his weight, Steve Lendosky took off 50 pounds and lost 17.483 percent, Kris Fry dropped 46.25 pounds and 18.801 percent and Sharon Jeardeau lost 47 pounds and 21.219 percent.

Vince Jeardeau has been named the winner, as the person with the largest percentage of weight loss. He is awarded a Nintendo Wii, a Wii Fit game, \$50 in Fennimore Chamber Bucks, and an annual couples membership to Fennimore Fitness.

The second-place person with the highest percentage of loss was Sharon Jeardeau. She earned a six-inch Subway sandwich per week for one year and \$25 in Chamber Bucks. Sharon also won the final weigh-in prize for losing 3.0556 percent of her body weight in the last two weeks.

The biggest loser of pounds (not taking first or second), Lendosky, was the recipient of one gallon of milk per week for one year from Swiss Valley Farms and \$50 in Chamber Bucks.

Finally, Kris Fry, who was deemed the woman to have lost the highest percentage of her weight (not in the top three), won a complete makeover from Serendipity Salon, which includes a manicure, a pedicure, a massage, and new hair and makeup.

In the side business competition of Get Fit, Brechler-Lendosky Insurance lost the highest percentage of weight. The company's staff lost 12.6961 percent of their weight in the contest, which earned them a \$300 advertising package from QueenB Radio and a Subway office platter.

Perception of Get Fit

Lendosky was the creator of Get Fit Fennimore. Always a fan of the "Biggest Loser" on TV, he decided to try to model a program after that show and do some good for the community. When 215 people signed up, he said he was overwhelmed by the response.

"Right away, everybody was really excited about it. That kind of diminished by the end, but I thought it went really well," he said. Taking care of most of the behind-the-scenes work, Lendosky collected weights from contestants via e-mail and compiling the results every other week. In the end, about 10 participants had never weighed in after the first night.

"It went about as I figured," he said. "I purposely held weigh-ins after some important dates, holidays like the Super Bowl, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day. There were some definite challenges in weight loss."

Successes

In addition to the ultimate winners, there were nine bi-weekly winners from each weigh in. Those individuals lost the highest percentage over the course of each two-week period. However, aside from all the stories of weight loss, Lendosky pointed out that several participants have gone off their blood pressure medicine, have lowered their cholesterol and have no more issues with sleep apnea.

"That is just so great. These people experienced life changing results," Lendosky said. "By the end, I started to see the same faces at the fitness center and those faces have changed. It's gone well. I'm very pleased."

Fourteen local residents reached their weight loss goal through the contest.

The biggest "losers"

The top four "losers" all have similar stories of success. Each continued to eat many of the same foods they have always consumed, although most of them added more fruits and vegetables to their diet, and all of them cut back their portion sizes of all meals and snacks. And of course, each started working out frequently.

"Instead of eating pizza, ice cream and candy bars, I cut back," Vince Jeardeau said. "Instead of candy bars, I ate a fiber bar. I think those are just as good as a candy bar."

Vince and his wife Sharon can now share their unique story of weight loss as a couple. Vince recalls the night of the sign-up, when he was walking out of Kwik Trip with a couple of pizzas and a Mountain Dew. He wasn't going to join the competition, but luckily for him, a friend conned him into it.

"I started going to the fitness center at least once a day, sometimes twice a day," he said.

Sharon, who works different hours than her husband, said she started out by walking more often, but eventually, she joined Vince at the fitness center as well. Eating was her key.

"Instead of eating five or six cookies, I just had one, and I ate a lot of veggies and fruits. I also ate very little bread," Sharon said. "I did the basic things that everybody knows they have to do to lose weight, things my doctor has been telling me for years."

Sharon said she was proud of how she started out running only eight minutes on the elliptical machine at the fitness center. Today, she can last for an hour.

"I just tell everyone, you have to start with small steps and work your way up," she said.

Steve Lendosky's results also came from working out, three to five times per week. He controlled his food portions, ate much more ground turkey and chicken and cut out salty food as well as pop too.

"I haven't had a pop since January. I drink a lot of water," he said. "I'm looking forward to at least being able to having a pop now, but I plan to keep maintaining my weight. I lost most of my weight right away, and I've been maintaining for the last month." He said that for once he is looking forward to taking his shirt off in Florida during a upcoming trip he has planned.

One interesting strategy Lendosky had was to play videogames on his PlayStation while he worked out on the stationary bike. "At home, my wife watches movies while she's on the treadmill. You've got to find something that works for you," he added.

In addition to her counterparts, Kris Fry went from "eating about anything" to lots more fruits and veggies. She also found that having a buddy, Jeri Novinska, to weigh-in with helped her.

Fry's exercising secret was riding with her husband, Greg, to Speedy Mart every morning when he went to work. Then, she would walk the mile back to her house.

"It wasn't bad. It was an affordable program and I had a good buddy, said Fry, who owns the "Grab-A-Cone" ice cream shop in Montfort. Working around food mostly every day, she said she just told herself that she could eat that "ice cream cone after the competition is over."

As a group, all four winners intend to maintain their weight loss and are even looking forward to next year's competition.

Looking ahead

In addition to planning for an update of the top contestants in a couple of months, Lendosky is already thinking about what can be changed prior to the next round of Get Fit Fennimore. He said he'd like to change the weigh-in process so that people can use the Internet to weigh-in. He said each participant could have a user name and password and then log in to record their weight each week. He also hopes to get more community members involved by focusing more on nutrition and lifestyle in addition to weight loss.

"There were some people who didn't get involved because they didn't need to lose weight. They just wanted to improve on their nutritional aspect of life," he explained.

Making it possible

According to Lendosky, Webwise Design, the company that provided online

pictures and results throughout the competition, were helpful in making Get Fit as successful as it was. A lot of participants went to the Web site to keep up with the contest.

"They were really good. I would e-mail them results and they would have it up on the site within five minutes," Lendosky said.

Also, Lendosky himself was the key ingredient in Get Fit's facilitation. "Steve put a lot of hours and bookwork into this. He deserves a lot of credit," Fry stated. "It was an affordable program and it was for the good of so many people."

To read more about the final results from the Get Fit Fennimore contest, and even take a look at before and after pictures of some of the contestants, visit www.fennimore.com.