

Round One of family weight loss competition ends

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Four months ago, the Rev. Paul Hart couldn't pass the cookie aisle in the grocery store without picking something up for the road.

"We need to call it what it is," said Hart, the pastor of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church. "It was an addiction for me."

But the days of being a slave to the sweets are gone for good now, Hart says, and he credits his faith for helping him to meet the challenge.

"God did this; I didn't do this," he declared. "It is so true that if you make one step, He'll make two."

Hart was one of 14 Winston-Salem and Greensboro residents who took part in a weight loss competition inspired by the hit TV-show "The Biggest Loser." Hart's sister, Linda Lindsay, rallied her family members and friends to join the weight loss effort when she started it earlier this year. Each competitor contributed a \$25 entry fee to the winner-takes-all race.

"It has been incredible,"



A before photo of winner Rev. Hart with his niece, second-place finisher Kim McKenzie-Banks.

Lindsay said of the competition, which began in August. "What it has done for me mostly is to teach me

healthy eating. It has taught me how to stay focused; it's taught me how to eat to live and not live to eat."

After four long months of dieting, exercising and restructuring their lifestyles to reflect their new, healthier choices, Lindsay and the 13 other competitors showed off their new bods at the final weigh-in celebration, held at the Village Tavern restaurant Dec. 5. Hart took home the \$350 pot, after dropping a whopping 41-pounds. Lindsay's daughter, Kim McKenzie-Banks, came in second, with a loss of 29-pounds, and Lindsay rounded out the top three with a loss of 25.

"I'm gonna need the \$350; I've got to buy new clothes," quipped Hart, who went from a size 56-waist pants to a size 48.

All jokes aside, Hart and Lindsay say they feel good knowing they are healthier.

"(Before losing weight) I was going about my everyday things, but I was still huffing and puffing doing it," Hart said. "I feel so much better now."

Though Thanksgiving brings its own set of challenges when it comes to food, both Hart and Lindsay say they remained steadfast in



A slimmer Kim McKenzie-Banks poses for the camera.

their quests for weight loss.

"This was the first Thanksgiving that I can remember in my life that I didn't go back for seconds," Hart said.

The competition will resume January 15, when Lindsay says another 35 people will be adding their names to the list, in addition

to the original group.

"We're going to have a pot almost as big as \$1000," she declared. "...I'm truly excited; I can't wait to start back up."

Lindsay has set her weight loss goal at 25-pounds this time around, while Hart is gunning for more than 50.

"You know what? I haven't done anything yet," Hart declared. "...I'm gonna weigh 250 (pounds) when I hit the scale (at the end of the competition on) April 15. Tax Day is gonna be my day."

Hart says taking control of his eating has boosted his self esteem.

"I've always been a happy person, always put Christ first in my life," he related. "But what has really changed for me is I think I'm more motivated. (I learned) you can achieve a goal, but first you have to set a goal."

The competition has had a positive impact on all the competitors, Lindsay said.

"It brought a stronger camaraderie in my family. It's just bringing us closer," she reported. "We're able to connect more now, I think."

Mason

from page A1

days after his chemo ended. He was supposed to be at his lowest point, but he was running around the house ... like any other kid."

Unfortunately, things have not gone so smoothly for LaVack and Mason's mother, Stacy Stout.

"It's been difficult," said LaVack, a native of San Diego, Calif. "...I'm probably 25 pounds lighter than I was six months ago."

The financial burden of Mason's illness continues to mount as well, as hospital visits and treatments accumulate.

"We weren't financially ready for this," LaVack said.

Mason faces six more 42-day rounds of chemotherapy at a cost of \$14,000 each. So far, LaVack says his health insurance has picked up the tab, but he is unsure whether

that will continue, because the medication Mason needs has not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children.

LaVack started a Web site, www.migisiman.org, as a way to allow family members and friends to keep up with Mason's progress and donate to his cause. The site is named in honor of the Migisi Tribe Mason was a member of at Eagle's Nest experiential learning camp in Brevard, NC.

"The happiest he's ever been in his life was this summer when he went to Eagle's Nest Camp," LaVack related. "I don't think a week goes by when he doesn't mention Eagle's Nest and how he wants to go back."

LaVack enlisted the help of his neighbor, Eddie Ingle, with the fundraising portion of the effort. Ingle founded the Seeds of Love nonprofit



Dave LaVack

earlier this year to help another young boy in the Washington Park area whose parents were also grappling with medical bills. The organization will eventually help Washington Park residents in a variety of ways, Ingle says, by hosting fundraiser events to create

scholarships and other resources for community members.

"We have a very strong Washington Park

Neighborhood Association, but it involves protecting the neighborhood, as opposed to looking after the people in the neighborhood," Ingle explained. "...There's a real need out there for people who fall through the cracks."

Seeds of Love volunteers have lent their support to the LaVack family in a variety of ways, from helping to set up a Paypal account where people can donate to Mason's cause online; to helping to organize - and

even participating in - Mason's first fundraiser, a "Shave-Off" slated for Dec. 12 at Swaim's Grocery.

LaVack says he is humbled by the outpouring of support for his family.

"There are a lot of times when I feel like ... I'm in this by myself," he said. "It definitely helps to know that there are people out there thinking about us."

Roughly 15 neighbors, family members and friends have signed on to participate in the Shave-Off, where donors can donate to either "shave" or "save" volunteers' hair. Mason's father, grandfather, stepfather and big brother, Evan, 10, are among those

who are going bald as an act of solidarity with the youngster. LaVack has said he will let Mason do the honors for him.

"I do not want to shave my head at all," he admitted, "but neither did he. He didn't have a choice."

While the road to Mason's recovery will be long, LaVack says his young son has inspired him to keep his eye on the prize.

"Now I compare everything to what he goes through, and I'm thinking, 'This is easy,'" LaVack said. "It makes me realize what's important."

To donate to Seeds of Love for Mason or for more information about the Shave-Off, slated for 2 p.m. Dec. 12, visit www.migisiman.org.

WINSTON-SALEM SYMPHONY

Robert Moody, Music Director



Handel's Messiah

A Holiday Tradition

Tuesday, December 15 at 7:30 P.M.
Wednesday, December 16 at 7:30 P.M.

Centenary United Methodist Church

Tickets \$10, \$20, \$40

336.464.0145 • WWW.WSSYMPHONY.ORG



BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina

Your plan for better health

Medicare Advantage Plans with prescription drug coverage
offered by PARTNERS National Health Plans of North Carolina, Inc.¹

Administered by the
Most trusted health insurer^{2,3}
in North Carolina

Highest customer satisfaction⁴
in North Carolina

Rated best overall quality⁵
in North Carolina

\$0.00
monthly
premium
plan⁶

Learn more!

Attend an upcoming Medicare Advantage meeting.

Annual Election Period ends December 31

Thurs., Dec. 17,
2:00 p.m.

Hampton Inn
1990 Hampton
Inn Court
Winston-Salem
(Near Hanes Mall)

Tues., Dec. 22,
2:00 p.m.

Hampton Inn
1990 Hampton Inn Court
Winston-Salem (Near
Hanes Mall)

Tues., Dec. 29,
10:00 a.m.

Quality Inn & Suites
2008 S. Hawthorne Rd.
Winston-Salem (Take
Hanes Mall Exit 190 then
left on Silas Creek)

An authorized sales representative will be present with information and applications. There is no obligation to enroll. For accommodations for persons with special needs at sales meetings, call the number below.

CALL NOW!

1-800-328-9605, Monday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
For the hearing impaired (TTY/TDD), call: 1-800-922-3140

Other products offered for Medicare beneficiaries include Blue Medicare SupplementSM and Blue Medicare RxSM (PDP)

PARTNERS is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract to provide HMO and PPO plans. Benefits, formulary, pharmacy, network premium and/or copayment/coinsurance may change on January 1, 2011. Please contact BCBSNC for details. The benefit information provided herein is a brief summary, but not a comprehensive description of available benefits. Additional information about benefits is available to assist you in making a decision about your coverage. This is an advertisement; for more information contact the plan.

1) Available with select plans. 2) Catevo Brand Study, February 2008; survey of 800 North Carolinians. 3) Includes all BCBSNC business. 4) Frederick Polls, September 2008; survey of 634 North Carolinians, comparing four health insurers. 5) Medicare Advantage HMO plans with prescription drug coverage, rated by the Medicare Options, compare Tool, 2009 Plans. Available at www.medicare.gov (Accessed July 2009). 6) Rate is for Blue Medicare HMO Standard plan, 2010. You must continue to pay your Part B premium if not otherwise paid for under Medicaid or another third party. 7) BCBSNC is a prescription drug plan sponsor with a Medicare contract. BCBSNC and PARTNERS are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. U6608a, 8/09 MO053_4424, 9/6/09