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

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 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,"



pants to a size 48.

knowing they are healthier.

"(Before losing weight) I

Though Thanksgiving

resources for community

Washington

Neighborhood

Association, but it

involves protect-

ing the neighbor-

hood, as opposed

to looking after

the people in the

neighborhood,"

Ingle explained.

need out there for

people who fall

through

... There's a real

'We have a very strong

the

of ways, from helping to set

up a Paypal account where

helping to organize - and

other

was going about my everyday

A before photo of winner Rev. Hart with his niece, secondplace 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."

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

earlier this year to help another young boy in the Washington Park area whose

After four long months of dieting, exercising 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 29pounds, and Lindsay rounded out the top three with a loss "I'm gonna need the \$350; I've got to buy new clothes," quipped Hart, who went from a size 56-waist

All jokes aside, Hart and A slimmer Kim McKenzie-Lindsay say they feel good Banks poses for the camera.

their quests for weight loss.

"This was the first Thanksgiving that I can things, but I was still huffing and puffing doing it," Hart remember in my life that I said. "I feel so much better 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

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 neighbors, family

Seeds of Love volunteers members and friends have have lent their support to the - signed on to participate in LaVack family in a variety the Shave-Off, where donors can donate to either "shave" or "save" volunteers' hair. people can donate to Mason's father, grandfather, Mason's cause online; to stepfather and big brother, Evan, 10, are among those

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."

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

"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 Shave-Off, slated for 2 p.m. Dec. 12 12, www.migistman.org.

Mason from page Al

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.

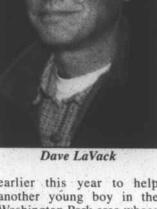
LaVack started a Web site, www.migisiman.org, asa way to allow family members and friends to keep up with Mason's progress and donate to his cause. The site is named in honor of the Migisi Tribe Mason was a member of at Eagle's Nest experiential learning camp in Brevard, NC.

"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

WINSTON-SALEM SYMPHONY

Robert Moody, Music Director



parents were also grappling with medical bills. organization will eventually help Washington Park residents in a variety of ways, Ingle says, by hosting fundraiser events to create

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