

Council, planning to discuss redevelopment, North 40 at joint meeting 10

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LGEF FUNDRAISING EFFORT BEGINS, AND IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Campaign goal is to raise \$1 million to save programs and teachers

By JUDY PETERSON

The Los Gatos Union School District enrolled 25 new students over the holidays, but because of the way Los Gatos schools are funded, state dollars to pay for their education will not follow them here.

The district gets the lions' share of its money from local property tax collections—the state provides very little funding to keep Fisher Middle School and Daves Avenue, Blossom Hill, Van Meter and Lexington elementary classrooms going.

So officials with the nonprofit Los Gatos Education Foundation, which raises money to help fund district programs, say the 2012 LGEF fundraising campaign is more important than ever. The campaign kicks off on Jan. 17 and runs through Feb. 17, with a goal of raising \$1 million.

Through pledges already made, LGEF has commitments totalling \$450,000, so the monthlong campaign will attempt to make up the difference.

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Dr. Lillian Soohoo

Board Certified Dermatologist

Dr. Soohoo specializes in general, cosmetic and pediatric dermatology and is also on the clinical faculty of Stanford Medical School. The Menkes Clinic is a state-of-the-art dermatology office. She welcomes new patients as well as former patients to her office in Mountain View.

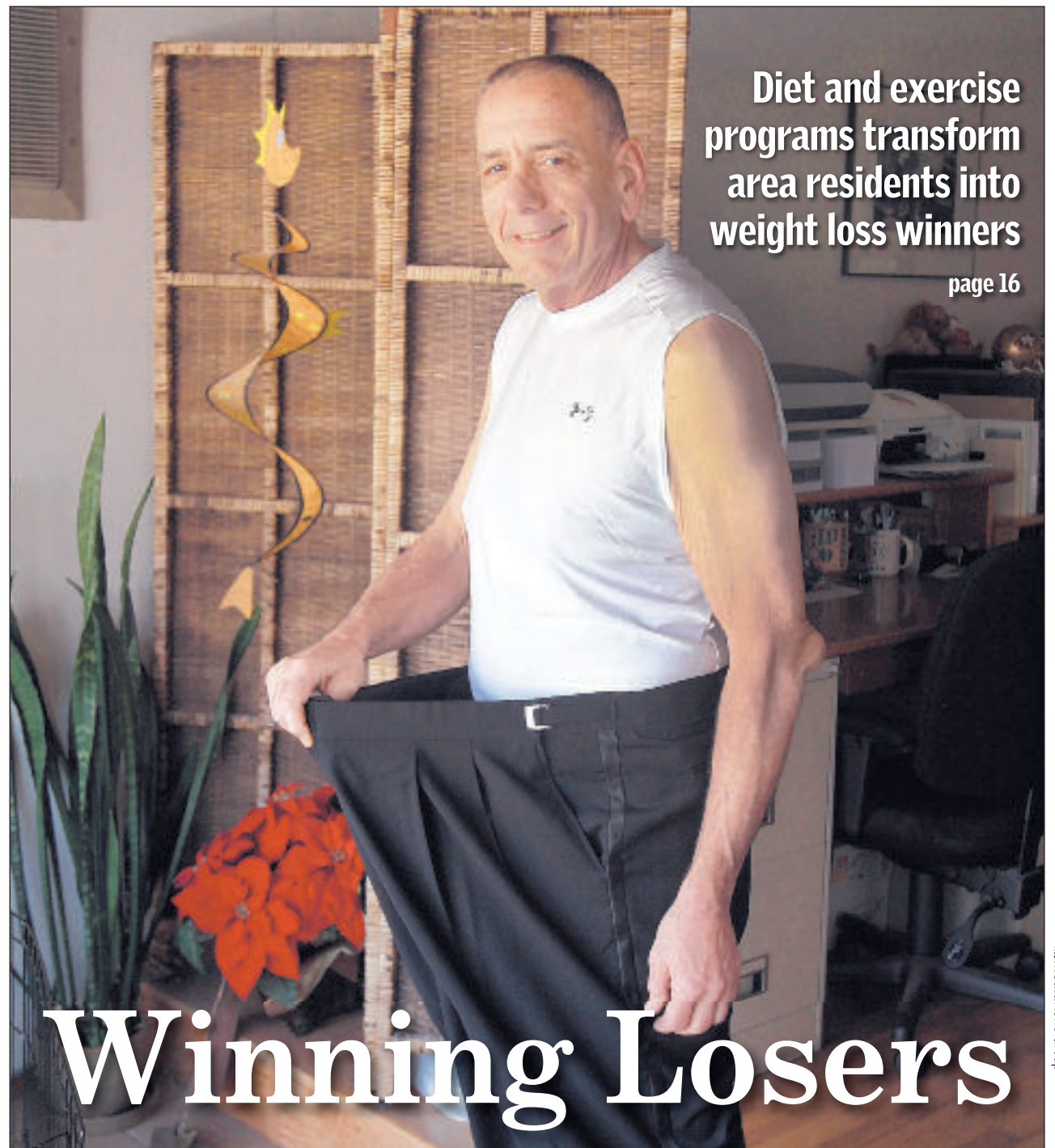


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Diet and exercise programs transform area residents into weight loss winners

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Winning Losers

Los Gatos resident Tim Musselman shows off a pair of pants he wore when he was close to 160 pounds heavier. Musselman and his wife, Nancy, have gone through a complete change in lifestyle to lose weight and get healthy.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE SAKKESTAD

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Los Gatos residents Tim and Nancy Musselman look through a cookbook for weight-conscious recipes, at left. With the help of Laurie Ward at Lite for Life in Los Gatos, the two have lost a combined 237 pounds. The photograph of the two of them before entering their weight loss program is above.

Life Changing

Area residents make significant lifestyle changes to lose weight, get fit

By MARIANNE L. HAMILTON

Photographs by GEORGE SAKKESTAD

A quick Google search of the most popular New Year's resolutions reveals that "losing weight," "getting fit" and "eating healthier foods" typically rank near the top of the list. After a protracted holiday season, with the attendant overindulgence in food and drink, many of us are in serious need of a physical reboot.

But several West Valley residents began 2012 with a distinct advantage: Realizing that their past weight-loss efforts had proved ineffective, they committed to serious fitness and nutritious programs last year (or even the year prior), with

admirable results.

Though they opted for a variety of regimens, all share a common success factor: All of these "biggest losers" worked with trainers, counselors or coaches, who offered encouragement and support and kept them on track. Through their months together—whether adhering strictly to their plans, or returning after the occasional tumble from the wagon—coaches and clients developed deep, long-lasting bonds.

Could 2012 be your year to make some serious changes? Consider recruiting your own personal cheerleader. You don't have to do it alone.

Tim and Nancy Musselman

There are those who dispute that coincidences exist. Tim and Nancy Musselman just might be in that category. Attending their regular monthly meeting of the Los Gatos Lions Club in April of 2009, Tim (now the club's secretary) found himself seated next to an unfamiliar face. A gregarious sort who'd been in marketing at Tandem prior to his retirement, he struck up a conversation.

Tim learned that his new friend was there to deliver the keynote

speech, and within moments she had both Tim's and Nancy's attention. A certified nutritionist, Laurie Ward is the operating manager of Lite for Life in Los Gatos. Since Tim was then tipping the scales at nearly 400 pounds and Nancy weighed in at 220, the couple was eager to hear about Ward's program.

As they rang in 2012, Tim was down 180 pounds, and his wife had dropped 63. The Los Gatos residents say they're still losing, crediting their success to a lifestyle change, support from Ward and a new, sensible approach to eating.

By the time Tim was in the eighth

grade, he had already topped 200 pounds. His weight seesawed throughout his life, dropping when he was training for 10K or marathon-distance races, and inching upward the rest of the time. During his Tandem tenure, an expense account paid for a variety of high-calorie meals with prospective customers. "I did a lot of traveling, and put on some very expensive fat," he confirms ruefully.

Nancy, meanwhile, had packed on "baby fat" with each of the couple's three children. Thyroid problems

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and a bout with breast cancer further compromised her body, and her inclination to get and remain fit. She went on Weight Watchers now and again, but inevitably gained back every pound she lost on the program. By the time her blood sugar levels veered into the same diabetic territory Tim already occupied, she knew drastic measures were needed. Chatting with Ward after the Lions Club meeting, the Musselmans had a moment of clarity.

"Laurie said her program was originally designed for diabetics," Nancy says. "When we heard the word 'diabetes,' we figured it might help Tim get his situation under control, and get off all of the pills he was taking. It really was a case of being in the right place and the right time, and us being ready to do something.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF
KATHLEEN LEARY

Los Gatos High School graduate Kathleen Leary was not pleased with her weight (photo above). 'When I got home after graduation in March last year I weighed myself, and was totally astounded and disgusted,' she said. So Leary did something about by visiting Los Gatos Health & Fitness and has lost 32 pounds (photo at right).

And the great thing was, we could do it together."

Launched 30 years ago, Lite for Life focuses on controlling blood sugar levels. "For the diabetic it's miraculous," Ward notes. "It also happens to work magic on anyone who wants to lose weight."

Ward vividly remembers the first day the Musselmans paid her a visit at Los Gatos Health & Fitness, where she maintains her office. Tim's weight necessitated that he step onto the club's electronic scale, since the numbers on her medical scale didn't go high enough. "And the tape I used to measure his waist wasn't able to touch ends, so I had to guess that another 12 inches needed to be added," says Ward.

Still, Ward sensed in the couple a genuine desire to make a transformation. "They set themselves up for success from the very beginning by signing up for a year-long program; there was no hesitation. They were ready to make a change, and they

dove in. I believe that readiness, as well as having a committed partner, was the key to their success."

With a combination of nutrition planning, portion control, low-impact exercise, setting realistic weight-loss milestones and writing down every morsel they put in their mouths each day, both Musselmans began to see the pounds melt away. Tim says the practice of recording his intake played a significant role in the process. "I would highly recommend it for anyone who wants to lose weight. If you're honest about writing down everything you're eating, seeing it on paper is truly amazing."

In the nearly two years since they began their journey back to health, the Musselmans have taken vacations, and enjoyed family gatherings, birthdays and holidays. Yet both have managed to stay within a pound or two of their desired targets. They agree that their weekly check-ins with Ward keep them on



The refrigerator at the Musselman home is now packed with healthier foods since Tim and Nancy started their weight loss regime. Nancy Musselman goes to the fridge to find a healthy snack.

track. "Laurie's available to us almost 24/7," Nancy says. "The kind of support she offers really makes a difference."

Ward is quick to return the compliment, saying, "Tim and Nancy are the reason I love my job so much, and the reason I chose this career. Witnessing their transformation has been awe-inspiring, and to say I'm proud of them would be the biggest understatement. They are superstars here, as they should be."

No exaggeration in that statement. The Musselmans' "before" and "after" photos are now on display at the club, which has earned the pair celebrity status around town. "People stop us in the grocery store and say, 'We're really proud of you for making that commitment,'" Nancy says. "It feels like we have a million people helping us ... it's really been a community effort."

And that's no coincidence.

Kathleen Leary

Throughout her years at Van Meter Elementary, C.T. English Middle School and Los Gatos High School, Kathleen Leary never felt comfortable in her skin. By the time the former Wildcat graduated in 2006, she wasn't extremely overweight.

But despite the acclaim she earned in school dramas and musicals, and as a member of the Jazz Purrs vocal ensemble, she continuously struggled with her self-image—a struggle that persisted through her years at the University of Oregon. But by her college years, she was self-medicating with food.

"When I got home after graduation in March last year I weighed myself, and was totally astounded and disgusted," she reports. "I knew it was not good for me to be that heavy."

Through former neighbor Julie Gouldsberry, Leary and her parents learned that free blood sugar testing was being offered at Los Gatos Health & Fitness, where Gouldsberry works as a Lite for Life nutrition counselor with program manager Laurie Ward. "We'd all seen Julie's own success with the program, so we decided it was time to change some things. I started the program and lost five pounds the first week, so I thought, 'Obviously my body likes this,'" Leary says.

Leary had tried other diets, including South Beach. She says that program made her "feel miserable

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all the time; it's basically a crash diet, and there's no way you can maintain the weight loss when you go off of it." With Gouldsberry's counseling, she felt she had found a workable plan. "I especially liked the one-on-one attention, and the regular weigh-in process. Talking to Julie and Laurie every week was so helpful."

Two months into her program, Leary received news that might well have sabotaged her quest: She had been selected to do some voice-over work in Hong Kong, where she and her family had lived for a time when her father was employed there. "A family friend is an actress and does voice work, so she'd helped me land the job," Leary says. "I ended up staying with my godmother, which made it really nice."

Leary's godmother is herself a healthy eater and encouraged Leary to make wise food choices, but she still found her resolve wavering from time to time. Gouldsberry and Ward came to her rescue, even though thousands of miles separated them from their client. "It was a bit of a challenge, given the different time zones, but they'd Skype with me and we'd call once in a while and email. They were so encouraging, and had such great advice. And if I wasn't doing so well, they helped me set a new goal for the next week," Leary says.

Ward has nothing but admiration for her globe-trotting client. "I spoke with Kathleen once every week for



the months she was away, and I'd review her electronic food journals



Joan Riskas works hard on the treadmill as 4 Ever Fit owner Brenda Kashuba looks on.

beforehand. If anyone had a right to make excuses it would be Kathleen, but she never did. She knew what she needed to do, and she did it."

During her stay in the Far East, Leary did voice work on a new iPad application that teaches phonics to ESL students, tutored native Chinese speakers while learning their language, and appeared in a musical. She also began a daily routine of either swimming or walking—a habit she's kept to this day. "I used to hate exercise. But swimming's great; it's zero-impact, and wonderful cardio exercise. And walking's easy, especially on all of the wonderful hiking trails around here."

At her lowest weight, Leary had dropped 32 pounds. She admits that her move back to Los Gatos and subsequent holiday revelry found her giving in to temptation. "That peppermint bark was pretty hard to push away at times," she laughs. But she's newly resolute, saying she

intends to shave off those pesky few pounds, and then some. "I know it will come back off soon. It's been great to see how relatively easy it is to get back on the program and maintain it."

As Leary mulls over a possible master of fine arts degree, and looks for other acting jobs, she says she has a newfound sense of confidence—one that will likely spill over into her career. "Losing that much weight makes me think that if I put my mind to it, I can do anything I want to. It's pretty exciting to realize that."

Now, that's the right image.

Joan Riskas

At the age of 74, many people couldn't be bothered to pursue a weight-loss program, let alone any sort of exercise plan. Not so Joan Riskas. She firmly intends to live the rest of her life "4 Ever Fit."

Riskas's husband succumbed to

4 Ever Fit owner Brenda Kashuba gives encouragement to client Joan Riskas, 73, as she works on her upper body strength. Riskas is all smiles after getting halfway to her goal of losing 100 pounds.

Alzheimer's in 2010—a long, harrowing decade after the first onset of the disease. By the time she became a widow, the constant need to lift Harry or move him from place to place had taken a brutal toll on Riskas: She underwent hip and knee replacements, as well as surgery on both rotator cuffs. The fact that she was so impaired further exacerbated her weight problem, which had steadily escalated during the years when she'd lived on snacks (rarely healthy ones) in the few moments when Harry didn't require supervision and care.

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Laurie Ward of Lite for Life, left, and Joe Gigantino of Los Gatos Health and Fitness have teamed together to help clients such as Tim and Nancy Musselman and Kathleen Leary zero in on their weight loss goals.

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Someday, Riskas thought, she'd have the time and wherewithal to get back into shape. But when she was unable to bend over or stand at the sink to rinse dishes, and couldn't walk without a cane or walker, she knew that day needed to come sooner than later.

In October of last year, Riskas learned that the Wish of a Lifetime Foundation (which grants wishes to seniors who have overcome significant challenges) was giving her a membership to the 4 Ever Fit Personal Training Studio in Saratoga, owned by Brenda Kashuba.

"Joan told me that she wanted to lose 100 pounds in a year," Kashuba recalls. "With the number of health issues she had at the time, I wasn't sure that was realistic, so we started with a goal of 50 pounds."

Before Kashuba began her work with Riskas, she insisted on checking her new client's blood pressure. "Brenda tried to measure it, but kept getting an error report because the numbers were so high,"

Riskas admits. "Then she dragged me off to CVS to use their machine. She was actually the person who found out that my blood pressure was off the Richter scale ... it was 225. I went directly from there to urgent care in the hospital."

Once Riskas got her medications and numbers calibrated, Kashuba and a colleague began counseling her on nutrition. Her beloved cheese-and-cracker snacks were out, along with ham, canned soups and all of the packaged foods that once filled her refrigerator and pantry. Kashuba also taught Riskas to count calories, something she'd never done before. "Brenda showed me that there's a whole different way to live. There are so many things you can do to change your lifestyle, at any age," Riskas says.

As the numbers on Riskas' scale began dropping, Kashuba put her on an exercise program with light weights and walking on the treadmill. "Brenda knows all of my physical challenges, and she's great about not overdoing anything," says Riskas.

Kashuba also was successful in enlisting a number of local businesses to help the cause. Athletic Performance

of Los Gatos co-owner and elite runner Christine Kennedy donated running shoes, Saratoga resident Jeff Slavich (who owns Tires Unlimited in San Jose) contributed a stationary bike and Rita Marcojohn of We've Got Your Back in Los Gatos donated lessons in Nordic walking, along with new poles. To ease Riskas's post-workout soreness, Los Gatos chiropractor Dr. Blaine Kingsbury agreed to administer his healing touch.

Gratefully recounting the many kindnesses of the local community, marshaled by Kashuba, Riskas says, "I'm so thankful and so blessed that I've had Brenda to help me. She's been there for the long run, and has literally given me my life back."

With 50 pounds off and counting, Riskas fully expects to meet her 100-pound goal this year, and vows she'll "never" return to her former physical condition. She jokes that she'll maintain her current exercise regimen, because "if I get down on the floor, I'm not sure I could get back up."

By the time she's 75, that should be no problem.