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ROUND 2 – A LONGTIME Y MEMBER FINDS SUCCESS TIMES 2 WITH THE YMCA’S DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAM

“I’m on round number 2; I begged them to let me back in! After the first one, I felt like I still needed support. And I needed the discipline of the weigh-ins. And I needed the support of the other participants. I was fortunate enough to get another group that was so, so, supportive.”

When Karen, a 30-year Y member, joined the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program, she was a motivated daughter with one goal-- she didn’t want to get diabetes.

About with gestational diabetes left Karen aware and alarmed that she was at risk for type 2 diabetes. However, once her kids were born and she began to settle into her new life, the once urgent threat to Karen’s health became a pale memory. Then it happened, Karen reached the age her father was when he struggled with diabetes. “I was reaching the age my dad was when he had diabetes, mid-fifties, and I began writing a list of all the risk factors I had . . . I was overweight, middle-aged, my father had diabetes about that time, both my grandmothers had diabetes, and I had gestational diabetes.” Karen says after absorbing her list, she thought to herself, “What would dad want me to do?” In that moment, Karen decided that the best way to honor her father’s memory was to take control of her health.

As a longtime Y member, Karen enjoyed being physically active but still struggled with her weight. Karen admits, “Sometimes it’s just hard to stop eating.” And according to Karen, this sentiment was shared by many of the women in her program group, it was this common theme that cemented their new friendships.

When Karen was handed a brochure at her Y that said the Y’s Diabetes Prevention Program may be able to help her prevent diabetes, she did her homework. The data that supports programs like the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program helped her make the decision to join. “I investigated it a little,” she says, “they [the CDC and the Y] had math that said if I do this, my risk for diabetes will be cut in half . . . Math is math and

Age: 57

Ethnicity: White

Children: 2 children

Married: Yes

Program location:
Central Coast
Connecticut

Program phase:
finished 2nd program
year

science is science.” Armed with this knowledge, Karen knew that if she adhered to the program, she would change her life.

Karen joined the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program at the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA. She knew that lifestyle changes were tough, but she was committed. She’d already won her battle with smoking and was ready to take on healthy eating. “I gotta tell you, quitting smoking was a lot easier than doing this,” Karen says. “You never have to smoke again in your life; you never have to pick up another cigarette. But you do have to eat.” But Karen, who lost 16 pounds during her first 16 weeks in the program says, “It can be done, it can be!” And she adds, “You just have to pay attention . . . I hate food diaries, but that’s the way to help you pay attention. And it works!”

The program worked so well for Karen that when her year ended, she signed on for a second round. “I’m on round number 2; I begged them to let me back in! After the first [yearlong program] one, I felt like I still needed support. And I needed the discipline of the weigh-ins. And I needed the support of the other participants. I was fortunate enough to get another group that was so, so, supportive.” Like so many others in the program, the group support is critical to Karen’s success. Karen’s favorite aspect of the program is the people. “I’m not alone,” she says “There’s other people that have the same kind of concerns as me . . . They really want to help, and I want to help them.”

Karen has now completed her second year in the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program and has lost nearly **20 percent** of her first year, pre-program, weight.