



Success Story Title:	A Bunch of Losers – 361 pounds to be exact!
Location	Huron County Health Department
Focus	This success story highlights the power of family role modeling and support in creating and maintaining healthy lifestyle change.
Strategy	WISEWOMAN Mary Dambacher and her extended family are creating a family support system that uses the phone, family visits, e-mail and the internet to share resources and offer on-going support that is allowing their many families to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
Outcomes	To date Mary Dambacher and her family have lost a total of 316 pounds. Mary has lost 40 pounds, dropped several dress sizes and has had a significant reduction in the number of coughing attacks from her asthma. Other family members have lost weight, significantly lowered their cholesterol, reduced their BMI and improved the symptoms of varicose veins.

Story Submitted By	Mary Thrushman, LPN, Program Lead (on behalf of WISEWOMAN Client Mary Dambacher) Huron County Health Department 1142 South Van Dyke Bad Axe, MI. 48413 (989) 269-7921 x182 mthrushman@hchd.us
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For more information about the Michigan WISEWOMAN Program go to <http://www.michigancancer.org/bcccp/wiseWomanProgram/index.cfm>

Huron County WISEWOMAN joins a ***Bunch of Losers***.

In August of 2006, the sister of WISEWOMAN client Mary Dambacher learned that she had elevated cholesterol. After doing some internet and bookstore research on making healthy lifestyle changes, she called another sister in Texas and challenged her to join her. The two sisters made a plan that included what foods they would eat, how many calories a day they should have, how much fat, how to get more fiber and what exercise program they could start and stick with. They agreed to call each other every Friday to talk about how they were doing and to help keep each other on track.

Within two weeks both sisters had their husbands join them. One sister's daughter also joined in. Soon other family members began to hear about the sister's and their family's successes. In no time at all family members in Nevada, North Carolina and Michigan joined. Today this family's "healthy lifestyle" team has 13 members. They e-mail each other on Sundays or Mondays to share everyone's weight loss, if they were at a plateau, or to share a new recipe or great product they've discovered.

How did they do it?

Mary offers these healthy eating tips:

- Switch from whole to skim milk.
- Choose the leanest cut of meat you can afford and trim all the fat you can see.
- Eat more fish, especially salmon. It's high in healthy omega fats.
- Eat more oatmeal. It's a low calorie fill-you-up meal and can lower your cholesterol.
- Find a low fat butter substitute that your family likes.
- Eliminate full fat butter in your cooking. Start experimenting with herbs to add some flavor.
- Educate yourself. Learn to read food labels.
- Eliminate or cut back on sugar.
- Take advantage of sugar-free and fat-free products.
- Drink lots of water. A well hydrated body burns calories more efficiently.

What can you learn from Mary?

1. Make a commitment to get healthier by educating yourself about healthy eating.
2. Write down everything you put in your mouth. You'll be amazed at what you're actually eating.
3. Invest in a good calorie and fat counter book. Mary's family uses *The Calorie King* and the Fat & Carbohydrate Counter.

4. Find a support system. If you don't have family members you can count on, use friends, neighbors, people from church or co-workers.
5. Don't go anywhere unprepared. If you're going to be out for a few hours take a healthy snack or two with you. Don't get caught with unhealthy snacks as your only option.
6. Make food fun.
7. Don't give up if you have a bad day or a bad week. Successful people keep on going, learning along the way until they reach their goal.
8. Be patient
9. Don't look at the changes as a diet.
10. Don't think about what you can't have. Think about all the wonderful food you can have.
11. If temptation strikes ask yourself why you want to eat it. Is there a healthier option.
12. Make meals an event.
13. Eat more slowly. Cut your food into smaller pieces and chew them slowly.
14. Practice portion control
15. DO eat snacks.
16. Stay off the scales.

So, what keeps them going?

Mary says that everyone in the family agrees that having a support network has been the primary key to their success. As Mary says, "Not only can you swap recipes, get a pep talk when you need it, or share your successes, but it also makes you more accountable".

How did their story turn out?

As of November 2007, Mary and her family have **lost more than 361 pounds!** This quote from Mary sums it all up. "Being healthy for us doesn't have an end point. We are trying to integrate the changes we've made into our daily live so we truly all reach a point where it is just what we do, the way we choose to eat and live because it makes us feel good and we enjoy it. **It's not something that will just end. It's just become the way we do things"**