

{ LOCAL SUCCESS } ————— *Ken and Susan Latham*

In Christmas of 2008, Mandeville residents Ken and Susan Latham decided to give each other a unique gift: they gave each other the gift of a personal trainer. They did not begin the training right away, but once they started receiving visits from a trainer in March 2009, they began to see immediate results.

The Lathams, now both 59 years old, attempted a number of strategies to lose weight. They tried fad diets, like Sugarbusters and others of that ilk, and had lost some weight that way, but the weight would always come back. They wanted to find a way to lose the weight and keep it off. “We felt we needed a lifestyle change and we felt we needed some assistance,” Ken said.

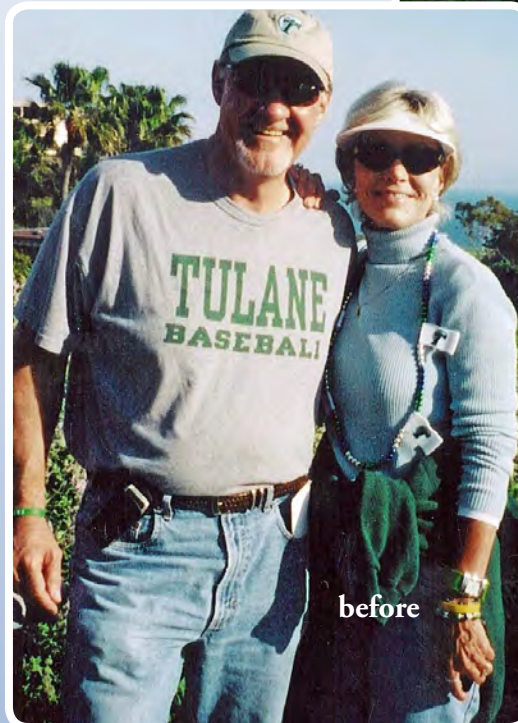
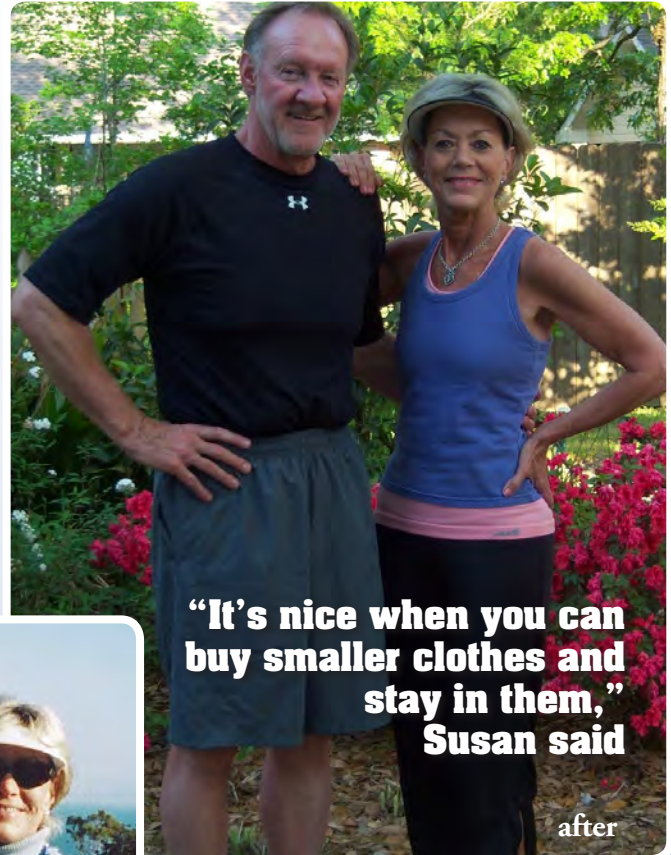
The couple decided on exercise, but were self-conscious at first. They were afraid that, as newcomers to weight training, they might look silly if they went to a gym. So they hired Joel Klein, who Susan had taught at Mandeville High School, to be their personal trainer and to make visits to their home twice a week instead of having to travel to a gym. “Neither one of us wanted to be musclebound, we just wanted to firm up,” Ken said.

In addition to the weight training, the Lathams do cardio work 5-6 days a week. Some days they walk, other days they jog, although Ken jokingly says jogging may not be the appropriate term. “We call it shuffling, it’s not really jogging,” Ken said.

The lifestyle changes were not limited to exercise, they included the Lathams’ diet as well. They started keeping food journals. Instead of having three large meals a day, they started eating 5-6 smaller meals a day. Ken says his normal daily eating routine includes an egg-white omelet and wheat toast, then a smoothie at mid-morning, then a salad at lunch, then an energy bar in the mid-afternoon, a reasonable meal at dinner (often fish or grilled chicken), and a light snack before bedtime.

In the past, the Lathams had eaten a lot of fried food and white breads/white pasta, which they have mostly eliminated from their diets. They will occasionally splurge and treat themselves to a less healthy food item, but they have largely been able to stay true to their new eating plans.

And so far, the results have been very positive. Ken, who stands at six feet, two inches tall, has gone from 245 lbs to 190 lbs and a size 40 to a size 34. Susan, who stands at five feet, six inches tall, has gone from 135 lbs to 120 lbs. “This has probably been my healthiest year,” Ken said, noting that his doctor has been amazed at the progress he’s made during his checkups.



Aside from the health benefits, being able to fit into smaller sizes has also been a thrill. “It’s nice when you can buy smaller clothes and stay in them,” Susan said.

When asked for advice to give to people looking to make a healthy lifestyle change, the Lathams emphasize the importance of getting a personal trainer to help give advice on diet and nutrition, as well as give instructions on proper form for weightlifting (so as to avoid injury and get the most out of a workout).

However, some people looking to get fit may not be able to afford a trainer. For those who may balk at spending the money in this difficult economy, the Lathams say weight loss can be achieved by eliminating carbonated drinks, switching from white bread and pasta to wheat bread and pasta, and eliminating fried foods and red meat from the diet. And if a person is afraid to set foot in a gym because of a lack of skill or fitness, he/she should not be embarrassed or self-conscious. Gyms are full of average people looking to become healthier.

“You’re not the only one,” Susan said.