

## **MY YEAR LONG JOURNEY . . . . .**

It is March 2016, I am in my early 40's feeling defeated, overweight, disappointed in myself, and even a little depressed. I suffered from frequent headaches, was on high cholesterol medication, was sleeping poorly, and felt out of breath just climbing a flight of stairs. I weighed almost 190 lbs. and had over 40% body fat. This was "out of character" for me as I had always tried to stay in good shape and I was one of those odd balls that really does love to exercise. However, I suffered a knee injury a couple years prior, which resulted in surgery followed by six months of rehabilitation. During this down time of rehab, I felt sorry for myself, developed poor eating habits and ultimately packed on the pounds. Following rehabilitation, I dabbled with different exercise programs and routines, trying to find something that would work for my wounded knee. Fear was my biggest battle as I did not want to reinjure and have to go through another surgery and rehabilitation period. Eventually, I joined a local fitness center with a friend and we began working out over our lunch. However, the poor eating habits continued and we would joke about our weight as we pulled into the QT convenience store after work outs to purchase a big Pepsi on ice, with a box of candy, of course. After all, we had earned it, right?

One evening I was venting to my husband about feeling fat and defeated and he suggested I enroll in Farrell's. I had been with the program in the past and he reminded me how happy I was with my progress in the program. This got me excited, but also nervous. Could I really do Farrell's again with my knee injury? I talked my friend into joining with me and I signed up for the 10 week challenge in April 2016. I wanted to do the challenge because I felt like I needed the coaching support and team environment that Farrell's provides. I would join the Southside Des Moines location and attend the noon class so I could continue to work out over my lunch hour. In the end, I definitely made the right choice. In June 2016, I was announced the winner of the 10 week challenge and was awarded the \$1000. I gave no thought as to what I would do with the money. I knew right away that I would re-enroll in the year-long FIT program and take a stab at the \$10,000 National Challenge. I would use this challenge to motivate me, as I knew I was not finished with my transformation. I had only just begun.

After the 10 weeks and my renewed commitment to the year-long challenge, my positive eating habits had become permanent. I was enjoying eating the foods that I used to turn my nose up to. I was craving the things that were making me healthy. In August 2016, I was excited at my annual physical when my doctor commented on my weight reduction and also took me off my cholesterol medication. I no longer needed it. By Christmas, I was wearing my "Skinny Jeans" (you know, the pair of jeans that you keep in the back of your closet just hoping that you will get back into them someday). And by spring 2017, I was digging tubs of college clothing out of the back of my closet. I was thrilled to wear my outdated Tommy Hilfiger capris from the early 2000's, just because I could.

Now, with the year almost behind me and my challenge coming to an end, I am excited about the future. I feel great. My headaches are gone. I am off all medications. I sleep well. My knee feels stronger than ever. I look forward to finding new ways to challenge myself and I will continue with my transformation. Challenge aside, I feel like I have already won!

I want to thank the management, staff and coaches at the Des Moines Southside Farrell's location. I always look forward to the challenges of the classes themselves, but I also look forward to seeing so many familiar friendly faces every day. The noon class has become like an extended family to me. You don't find this type of environment just anywhere!