



Major Weight Loss: A Winnable Marathon

For first time marathon runners, there's a moment when every athlete knows whether or not they will be able to complete the full 26.2 mile course. For Rebecca Adey-Merrithew, the "moment" came at mile 16 during a training run for the 2015 Chicago Marathon. She finished Chicago strong and checked a box on her life's bucket list, then immediately set her sights on the 2016 Boston Marathon. Fittingly, she finished Boston Strong, but with a little help from her last experience. "The water bottle that I carried not only had water in it, it also had my Chicago medal in case I got to a point where I thought I couldn't do it," explains Rebecca. "I figured the medal would remind me that I had before and I could again. I didn't need it, but I had it anyway."

Rebecca's life-long dream was achieved by overcoming a decades-long battle with weight. It takes a certain dedication and discipline to tackle a marathon: smart choices, change and sacrifice. Rebecca admittedly had good reason to be skeptical about reaching her goal. A year before she started her training, she weighed 317 pounds. The idea of running a marathon was not realistic. Rebecca was active; in fact, she has hiked all of the 48 highest mountain peaks in New Hampshire. "I told myself I was healthy even though I was fat. But truth is I was killing myself," she recalls. She was finally motivated to make some changes when she saw a photo of herself and did not like what she saw.

She turned her life around

"The solution was sitting right next to me, in my wife, Heather." In January of 2014, Heather Adey-Merrithew underwent laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy, a surgery that both dramatically shrinks the size of the stomach, restricting food intake, and alters numerous gut hormones for digestion. Heather lost 100 pounds and opened Rebecca's eyes to the possibilities. Seven months later, Rebecca had the same procedure. The



All smiles—Rebecca Adey-Merrithew celebrates the ultimate success of completing her second marathon.

continued on page 4

Medical News

Major Weight Loss: A Winnable Marathon, continued from page 3

procedure, along with a drive to change, has given her a new lease on life. "I can take our two kids and the nieces and nephews outside and run around with them. I couldn't do that a few years ago," adds Rebecca.



Dr. Andrew Wu, a bariatric and general surgeon specialist at CMC's Obesity Treatment Center, an MBSAQIP Accredited Comprehensive Center, performed the laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy on both women, and has remained in touch. "I think Rebecca is a model patient," says Dr. Wu. "She sees the

operation not as, 'Oh let me go get an operation', but rather as a tool she can use in addition to her drive to eat right, live a healthy life with exercise and make this the ultimate combination for success."

Before CMC doctors will perform this surgery, patients must first commit to a lifestyle change. That process includes losing at least eight percent of their body weight themselves, attending a six-week lifestyle change class and going through a psychological evaluation.

"If you can lose the weight on your own, and learn the tools to help you eat right and exercise, that's my number one goal," explains Dr. Wu. "In the right cases, and with patients dedicated to making permanent changes in their life, surgical treatment is beneficial."

She went full speed

Dr. Wu points to Rebecca's changes as proof. "She went full speed," says Dr. Wu. "She has the internal drive to eat right, exercise and keep making good decisions."

Rebecca's diet is now 1200-1400 calories a day. The entire family has adjusted. "We got rid of our dinner plates, and now we eat off of salad plates," says Rebecca. "Every week, I develop a meal plan and we prepare meals each Sunday. Everything is labeled and portioned. It's easy for us because it is already prepped." The kids are making better choices,

there's mostly healthy food in the house, and both women say that is the key to long-term success. "I want to play on the ground with my grandchildren," says Rebecca. "If I hadn't made this commitment, that wouldn't happen."

For those struggling with obesity, Rebecca offers this advice: "If you don't make the change, think about what is ahead of you and consider whether the known is more dangerous and scary than the unknown, because it should be." Rebecca says the counseling and support she received from family and from the medical staff at CMC has made the difference. "The CMC approach is 'Let me help you get well', and that really appealed to me," says Rebecca. "They were interested in my health, not my money."

Every day, she's reminded that life is a marathon, which is appropriate given Rebecca's last couple of years. She also has learned nothing great is achieved alone. Her family cheered her on along the Boston Marathon route, images she will always carry with her towards every new finish line she faces.

For more information about the CMC Obesity Treatment Center, call 603.663.7377 and refer to pages 14 and 15 to review workshops and introductory offerings. ■■



We don't just change the numbers on the scale, we change lives

Our Obesity Treatment Center offers a team-based approach that will support you every step of

the way to win your battle with obesity. Our program has recently been re-designated by the Metabolic and Bariatric Accreditation Comprehensive Center and Quality Improvement Program, a joint venture of the American College of Surgeons and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. Only a select group of bariatric surgery programs in the nation have met the requirements to achieve this important accreditation, signifying the highest standards in safe, quality weight loss surgery. ■■