

Since beginning their weight loss journey, the Balusek family eats healthy meals together, works out multiple nights a week at fitness boot camp, and encourages one another through challenging times



Weight WARRIORS

How one local family dropped almost 500 pounds... and counting

Written by Mary Hogan | Photography by Jason Lehecka

When the Balusek family crossed the finish line of the Kingsland Baptist Church 10K Family Run, it was one of the proudest moments of their lives. “Who would have ever thought we would be in a 10K?” says mom Lori Balusek, who attended school in Katy ISD. Lori, her husband Vince, and their children Josh, 20, Lexi, 15, and Kami, 11, have been battling to lose weight together, with stellar results: Between them, they have lost over 460 pounds and are keeping it off through exercise and healthy eating. Their inspirational story has been featured in several publications around the nation, and they will soon launch a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health of families and kids. “Our experience in losing weight has been the most rewarding feeling,” Lori shares.

A Dire Situation

There are many causes for obesity in today’s culture, with stress and depression most frequently factoring in to the equation. Lori and Vince, both 42, have battled obesity all their life. Each has experimented with multiple fad diets, and Lori even underwent gastric bypass surgery. A multiple string of miscarriages and a scary, life-threatening fight against colon cancer caused severe depression in her life and triggered emotional eating as a response. Vince has definitely encountered major trials in his life, too, having been hospitalized for a stroke and a severe blood clot, as well as a motorcycle accident a few years later.

Blessed with three children, Lori and Vince soon began to notice the way their children were bullied at school because of their weight. PE class became a source of humiliation and at one point, their son Josh tragically felt like his life might be easier if he wasn’t here anymore. “Our family’s situation was really quite dire, and we didn’t truly know it,” Lori shares. “We were so very unhealthy and overweight. Our kids went through such teasing and humiliation due to their weight.”

The Turning Point

Shortly after Vince was involved in the motorcycle accident, Lori’s mother, who lives in Katy, brought over a bottle of Monavie juice, which she said contained a healthy amount of antioxidants and nutrients. He reluctantly drank the concoction and immediately noticed a difference in his energy level. Soon, Lori had tried the Monavie juice, too, and was eventually selected to take part in the company’s RVL weight management system. Vince followed suit, and within three months, Lori had lost 43 pounds and Vince had lost 60 pounds.

Their children saw their parents’ determination to lead healthier lives and became motivated, too. “I was overweight and not watching what I ate,” shares Kami, who at only 11 years old has lost over 65 pounds. “It finally occurred to me that I had to do something, because when I weighed in at the doctor’s office, it was horrible.”

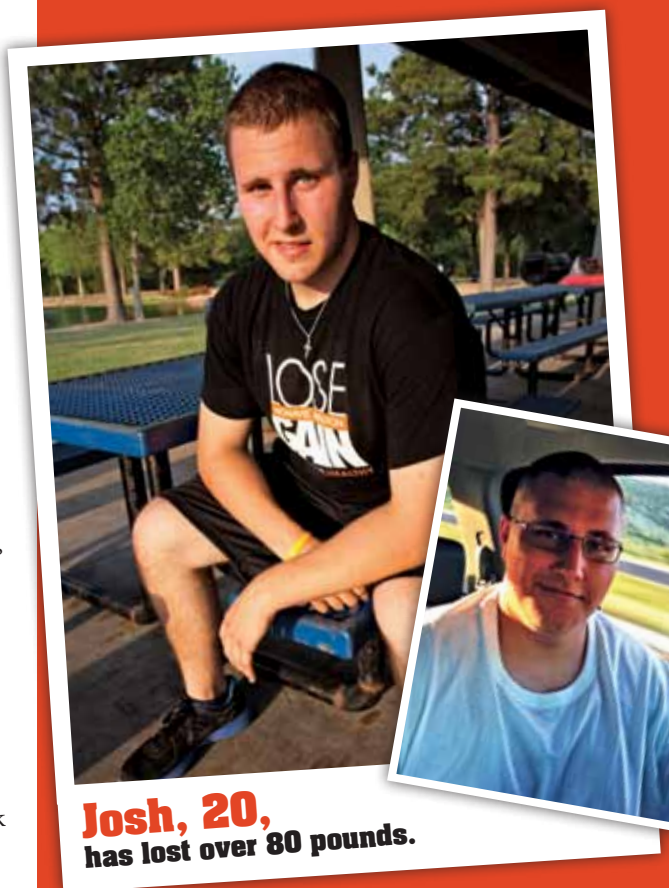
Cheering Each Other On

Since they’ve been on their weight loss journey, they do everything together, says Josh, who has lost over 80 pounds. “Our weight loss has given us all more self-confidence and a desire to help other families who want to lose weight and become more active,” he says. “We used to just sit on the couch and watch TV and movies.”

Now, you can find the Baluseks working out together in the evening, four to five days a week during fitness boot camp. “Before I lost 65 pounds, I could never exercise,” recalls Kami. “I didn’t even like PE class, because I couldn’t do what the other kids did. But now, I can. I was so proud, because last week in pre-athletics, I ran my mile in 9.40 minutes. Last year, my one-mile time was 14 minutes.”



Lexi, 15,
has lost over 70 pounds.



Josh, 20,
has lost over 80 pounds.

The support they got from one another helped encourage them to stay the course and not relapse to their old unhealthy habits. "Our family is always there for each other," says Lexi, who has lost over 72 pounds. "During workouts, we cheer each other on and tell each other, 'You can do it!'"

They have encountered a few frustrating moments along the way, like reaching a weight loss plateau, but have always overcome obstacles through support and encouragement. "Yes, there have been obstacles in our path, such as reaching a plateau and really having to fight through to lose the weight," Lexi says. "But as we stayed strong as a family and pushed each other, we overcame those obstacles and moved on."

Transforming Their Lives

After transforming their lives for the better, the Baluseks want to pay it forward to others seeking relief from obesity. "We have people from all parts of the world that contact us because they heard our story," shares Lori, who has lost over 100 pounds. "What they say is how we have inspired them or someone they have shared our story with to lose weight and make life changes for better health."

They feel humbled by the lives they have touched and are in awe at how one family's story can positively impact so many others. "We want to help and touch millions more," Lori



Kami, II,
has lost over 65 pounds.

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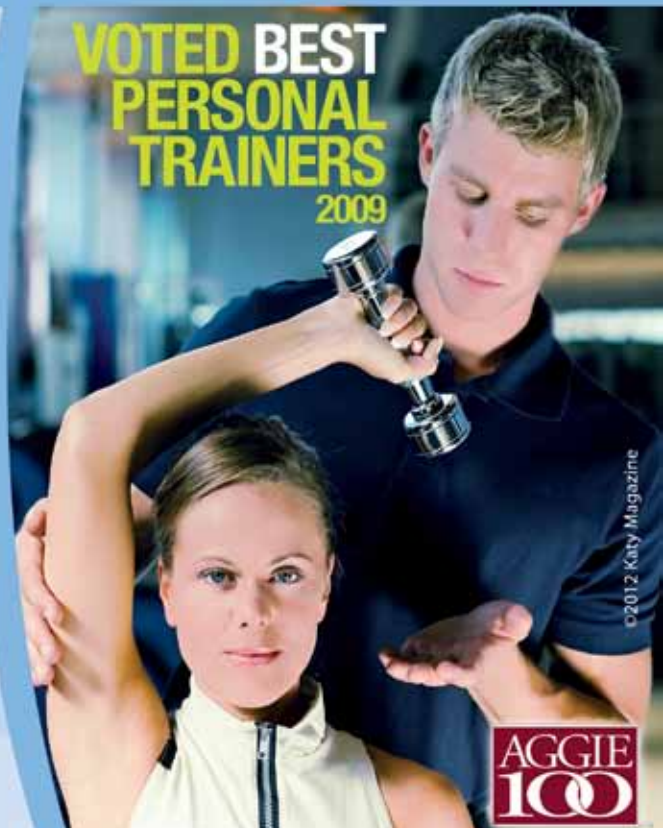
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Dad, Vince has lost over 125 pounds.
Mom, Lori has lost over 100 pounds.

adds. "What makes us cry is seeing our kids, who would not run or exercise before, take off and be right at the front of the group."

They plan on starting a nonprofit dedicated to helping other families with similar weight struggles and are also working on a family website that chronicles their weight loss journey. Lori encourages parents to take an active role in their children's health. "We have become so much closer doing this together as a family," she advises. "It's important to exercise, eat, and talk through problems together. We as a community and parents need to turn off TVs and video games and get up and move and communicate with our children."

No matter where you are at in your journey for a healthier life, never give up. "If I could tell other families anything, it would be to look at what we did and do the same thing," says Josh. "Stop making excuses and just do it!" KM

MARY HOGAN enjoys being associate editor of Katy Magazine and is deeply inspired by families like the Baluseks, who are working towards a healthy, happy future and encouraging others along the way.

The Balusek family invites you to contact them for their thoughts and suggestions on weight loss as a family. Email teamskinny5@yahoo.com.



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