

# Program helps Catholics shed pounds

B3

Faith & Family

Catholic Courier | Diocese of Rochester, NY | July 2004

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

## Health

Kathy Donohue, a member of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Rochester, has tried several different diets over the years, but has never been able to stick to one for more than three weeks or lose more than 18 pounds. Finally, she decided to turn to prayer for an answer to her struggle.

While Donohue was praying, she remembered an ad about a program called The Light Weigh ([www.lightweigh.com](http://www.lightweigh.com)) that she'd clipped from a Catholic magazine more than a year earlier. She went to her files, and "there it was, right on top, staring me in the face. I really did feel like it was an answer to prayer," Donohue said.

Donohue took the information to her pastor and in January organized a Light Weigh group at her parish. Donohue has lost 27 pounds since then, and the other eight women in the group have also experienced varying degrees of success.

The Light Weigh is a Catholic Bible study and video series designed to help people overcome temptation, grow spiritually and by doing so, lose weight. It was developed by Suzanne Fowler of Leawood, Kan., in 1989 and has since spread and become popular around the world, with approximately 1,000 groups currently following the program, Fowler estimated.

Throughout the 12-week program, members meet weekly to study, talk about Scripture passages and watch a video. Participants also receive six audio tapes, a workbook and a spiritual-growth kit.

One of the main messages of the program, which is reinforced through all Light Weigh materials,

is that people overeat to fill an emotional need, which can only be filled by seeking God. The Light Weigh is designed to help people find peace with food by taking the focus off of food and themselves and putting it on God and prayer. The program also draws upon the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Theresa of Lisieux.

Another key component of The Light Weigh is helping people realize the eternal love God has for them.

"People are so precious to him, and it has nothing to do with what they weigh," Fowler said. "This is really transforming for people. When they realize how much he loves them, it's so beautiful. When they realize this they start running into his arms, instead of away from him."

Light Weigh participants are encouraged to tune in to their bodies and fast from food until they feel physical hunger, Donohue said. This is more effective than simply not eating between meals because it involves prayer, and each time participants fast, they offer it up for a friend or loved one they're praying for, she said.

Through the videos and other materials, Fowler also encourages participants to eat whatever they want, but to eat that in what she calls a half-portion — which is about the size of a clenched fist — and to always leave the last bite on their plate. These methods are intended to develop a detachment for food, and Donohue said they work.

"So many times when I sat down with that half-portion I thought, 'this isn't going to be enough, I'm



After the group finished the 12-week program, all seven members were so happy with the program that they decided to repeat it, as did the group at St. Stanislaus.

The first time through the program, Trickler said, "the spirituality of it really hit everyone more than the practical part. The practical is there, too, but the spirituality is just so beautiful. When you want to eat when it's not time to eat, you stop, you go to the Bible, you ask for intercession from Our Lady or the saints or Jesus. ... Our bodies are temples. You're doing it for God and not just for yourself."

Donohue said the program's spirituality was a big selling point for her group as well.

"It is unapologetically Catholic, but it's not the kind of Catholicism that beats you over the head. It uses what only our Catholic faith offers, (the belief) that our sacrifices affect the body of Christ," Donohue said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Several diocesan parishes also host or rent their parish halls to nondenominational weight-loss programs, which can also be convenient alternatives for people seeking to lose weight. A Weight Watchers group meets weekly at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Auburn. Overeaters Anonymous, a recovery program for compulsive overeaters, meets weekly at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Spencerport. This program is not about dieting or weight loss; rather, it addresses physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, following the same basic philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous.

never going to be full,' but I've always been satisfied," Donohue said.

Meeting weekly as a group also helps the group members build fellowship and be accountable to each other, as well as to themselves, she added.

Theresa Trickler of St. Mary's Parish in Waterloo has been a fan of The Light Weigh ever since she heard Fowler talk about it on a Catholic radio program. She was so impressed by what she heard that she started a group at her parish.

70th Season

Since 1935

## Holl's Inn

*An Old-Fashioned Summer Family Resort*

- The Family Resort on Fourth Lake • Open late June thru Labor Day
- Swimming, Boating on premises • Golfing nearby
- Rates from \$85-\$185 per day/per person (includes 3 meals daily)
- Weekly and Family Rates, as well • All rooms with private baths
- **New!** Housekeeping Cottages (no meals, no service)

Located in the Central Adirondacks (65 miles north of exit 31, Utica, NY)  
 Preseason: 315-733-2748 • Summer: 315-357-2941  
 S. Shore Rd. • PO Box 417 • Inlet, NY 13360  
[www.hollsin.com](http://www.hollsin.com)

## THE TRANSITIONAL CARE CENTER

at Fairport Baptist Homes

100 YEARS OF CARING

- ♥ Rehabilitation
  - Physical Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Speech Therapy
- ♥ Extensive Medical recovery services
  - All private rooms

585.388.2307

4646 Nine Mile Point Road, Fairport, NY 14450 • [www.rahsa.org](http://www.rahsa.org)

SE  
 imer's  
 warn-  
 mmon  
 r's dis-  
 ng sev-  
 d get a  
 ation.  
 affects

ing fa-

age

ne and

gment

bstract

behav-

ity

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty

ty