

Suburban News

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Union County's Largest Newspaper

Clark Youth Changes His Image With Help From New Image Camps

Clark-John Byrne of Clark is winning the "battle of the bulge" with the help of New Image Camps. The young man has, so far, lost 50 pounds and continues to integrate everything he learned at camp about nutrition and fitness into his daily life.

With the help of the experts at New Image Camps, the growing problem of childhood obesity is on the road to being reduced for more than 900 children each summer. Activities include fun exercises, social programs, nutritious meals and nutritional education and methods for building self esteem. New Image promotes participation rather than competition.

Tony Sparber, founder of New Image Camps, grew up feeling like the "odd man out," a slightly chunky child who wasn't invited to all the parties and often the last one picked for teams in gym class. This is a story familiar to thousands of kids across the country, but Sparber's story differs in that, at the age of 15, his family played an integral part in developing an organization to help overweight children lose weight. In 1971, Sparber's father founded Weight Watcher's Camps and it was at camp that Sparber was able to take the weight off-more than 30 pounds-become more popular with his peers and, more importantly, more comfortable with himself.

From 1986 to 1991, Sparber served as executive director of the Weight Watchers Camp program. There, he met his wife, Dale, who was a counselor. The company was sold in 1991 and the two opened a weight loss camp of their own, calling it New Image Camp. With more than 20 years experience

in the business, the couple has dedicated their lives to helping over-weight youngsters to not only lose weight, but to build self esteem in the process.

According to Sparber, the key to a successful summer at a weight loss camp does not depend on the total amount of pounds lost. "My goal for the campers is to teach them the same life skills that helped me as a teenager. I want each one to return home from camp in the best physical and mental shape of their lives."

At three beautiful locations across the United States-Camp Vanguard in Lake Wales, Florida, Camp Ojai in Ojai, California, and Camp Pocono Trails in the heart of the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania-each New Image Camp offers campers the opportunity to participate in up to 39 athletic and non-athletic activities including water skiing, arts and crafts, journalism, basketball and field trips to nearby amusement parks.

Camp Pocono Trails, for example, offers an onsite lake with water skiing and jet skiing, two separate swimming pools (boy and girls), only six to eight campers per bunk without using bunk beds, as well as a unique open telephone policy. The facility's new Odyssey Adventure Course combines ropes with climbing walls, an obstacle course, giant swing, zip line and more.

According to a letter written by John Bryne's mother, Susan, the New Image Camp experience made all the difference in the life of her son. ■



John Byrne Before



John Byrne After



Dear Tony and Staff,

I wanted to thank you for having a lasting positive influence on my son John. He attended your New Image Weight Loss Camp last summer at Camp Pocono Trails.

I found it searching on the Internet one day, and approached John with it. The pictures on the site looked fun and the information that was provided seemed like this could be a good place for John to start a weight loss program.

We attended the orientation that May 2003, and soon John would be on his way. It looked like a great place to be.

It was a hot summer, but the daily pool activities there kept him active and cool. He told me how hard the calisthenics were, but after the first week he found he was able to keep up much better. He liked seeing his progress.

John was able to call home when he wanted. This was not usual type of camp rules in other places. This helped in our decision to send him to New Image as well. Not that we expected him to call daily, but it was nice to know he could. This would be his first three weeks away. He did call the day after we dropped him off. He was happy and loving it already. Then he didn't call for three days, and when he finally did, I ask him why he hadn't called. He told me he forgot! That told me he was happy and loving it.

The second week, he received the camper of the week award. He called excited to tell us. More than anything, except the friends he made, the education he got from the staff about dieting and nutrition was outstanding. He got home and I had already emptied out most of the pantry. We went food shopping together the next day and he told me how the white bread had to go and be replaced with wheat. Rice too, no more white starches he would tell me. He learned how to make trail mix and snack on that. What to pick for healthy alternatives and even recipes for me to cook and for us all to enjoy. They had provided a booklet and we used it. He would remind us that carbs are not the enemy and that we could structure them within the day.

When he left I heard some of his friends and counselors say, "stay on program John." He did just that. He's lost almost 50 pounds, 18 while in camp and the rest over the last year. He's going back this summer. He would like to lose more, but I think even if he was at his goal or close, he would be going back. He still talks to his friend Steve from Fla through e-mail and phone. It was a very life long positive experience.

I cannot thank you enough. We emptied out our pantry, and you filled John's head with confidence and knowledge that he could stay on "program" forever.

Thank you,
Susan, Jack & John Byrne

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