

Eating to live

Matthews naturopathic center teaches natural weight loss

by Kara Lopp
kara@matthewsminthillweekly.com

Name a diet program. Lolla Lea has tried it.

The 43-year-old Matthews resident has prepared the prepackaged meals, downed the shakes and popped the pills. The results were fleeting – until she stumbled on a new, surprisingly natural weight-loss program.

With help from the Carolinas Natural Health Center, 1126 Sam Newell Road in Matthews, 5-foot, 2-inch Lea lost 30 pounds in three months. The Wachovia branch manager also dropped from a size 12 to a size 6.



Lolla Lea, 43, of Matthews lost 30 pounds with help from Carolinas Natural Health Center.



“This has been the most empowering journey I’ve been on,” Lea said. “Finally I feel like I’ve got it.”

Touting the success of patients like Lea, Carolinas Natural Health Center launched the Natural Weight Loss Center of the Carolinas at its Matthews location last month. A second location opened in Ballantyne two weeks ago.

For Michael Smith, a naturopathic physician and the center’s owner, helping people safely lose weight – and keep it off – has become a passion. “If you ask someone, ‘How do you lose weight?’ everyone knows you eat fewer calories and burn more calories.

“But few people really know how to do it in a way that they can sustain,” he said. “The only real way that someone can lose weight and keep it off for life is by retraining themselves how to eat real food and how to do it in a way that’s healthy.”

In this weight-loss program, patients buy their own food from the grocery store and are free to eat most common foods, except high-carbohydrate bread, pasta and potatoes, Smith said. Patients instead get carbs mostly from vegetables.

During weekly sessions, which include weigh-ins and measurements, there’s talk of portion size and how to make healthy meals in minutes.

The program costs \$125 for an initial visit and all diet materials, and \$399 per month until the patient reaches his or her target weight.

Smith knows the program works – his own family tried it about three years ago.



Michael Smith

Smith said he lost 17 pounds and his wife, Debby, lost 30. They’ve both kept it off.

“We both ate healthy to begin with. That wasn’t the issue. But it was realizing all the extra things that you eat,” he said. “I remember we went shopping one time while we were on the program, and I looked in the cart and it was like, ‘Wow, we don’t have that much food here.’”

“But it’s all you need. You just don’t need to eat as much food as you think you do to feel good, to feel satisfied.”

Lea, who said she struggled with high blood pressure before the weight came off, can attest to that. She doesn’t deprive herself of foods she enjoys, including the occasional sweet, but she knows how to eat them.

“I feel better than I’ve ever felt in my life,” she said. □

BREAK THE SNACKING HABIT

Tempted to snack out of habit? Smith recommends:

- Asking yourself, “Am I really hungry?”
- Distracting yourself by going for a walk or doing 20 push-ups
- Drinking a glass of water



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Photos courtesy of Lolla Lea