

# Success Stories

W

hen I graduated from college and started my first job in the Information Technology industry, I did not realize the importance of exercising. It was always easy for me to maintain my weight, and being younger, I wasn't concerned about my health. As I put on pounds from sitting behind a desk all day, I decided I had to do something about it. I joined a gym and lost the weight I had gained. For years I exercised purely to maintain my weight and keep eating all the delicious foods we have here in New Orleans.

After I turned 30, I began to realize how important exercising and eating healthy really is. Eventually I added weight training to my routine. However my main reason to exercise continued to be weight maintenance. That was until three years ago as I was performing my monthly self breast exam, I found a lump. I went to the doctor to have it checked, and within a week, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. At age 36 and with no family history of breast cancer, it was the farthest thing from my mind. I had a very aggressive form of cancer, and had I not found the lump myself, it would have been 9 months until my next doctor's visit. That would have been 9 more months for it to grow and spread. Because yearly mammograms are only given to women over 40, a monthly self breast exam is your best protection for early detection. Breast cancer is more successful and easily treated, if found early like mine was.

Because I was physically fit, my body was able to bounce back from the chemotherapy, radiation and other adjuvant therapy I was given. I was stressed both mentally and physically, and the medicines were hard on my heart, but I was able to rebound much quicker and was able to handle a more aggressive treatment regimen, because I was in good shape. Exercise helped me control my stress level, weight and sleep better.

Before Hurricane Katrina, I went to a gym located in the New Orleans Center, and after I returned home, it did not re-open. I was so excited to hear that they were still opening the LSUHSC Wellness Center. During my cancer treatments and with the hurricane, I had not joined a new gym, and I was not exercising as often as I should. I wanted to get back to where I was before cancer. I wanted to feel young and healthy again.

I started going to the LSUHSC Wellness Center when they opened a year ago. All of the equipment is new, the gym is always clean, and the staff is both knowledgeable and friendly. They always tell me hello and know me by name. The center also offers a wide variety of classes from aerobic, spinning, muscle training, and my new thing, Pilates Reformer. When I need advice or have questions on how to improve my routine, the staff is always there and helpful.

I am at the gym around 4 times a week, and it makes me feel good both mentally and physically. My goal now is to be healthy. Working out at the LSUHSC Wellness Center is helping me to achieve that goal. My co-workers/workout buddies and the staff at the Wellness Center make sure I stay on track.

I am now done with my treatments, feeling healthy again and cancer free!

