

# “We Lost Big as a Team!”

*When nurse STACY ZANDEE took herself on as a patient, her daughter followed suit—and together they lost 212 pounds*

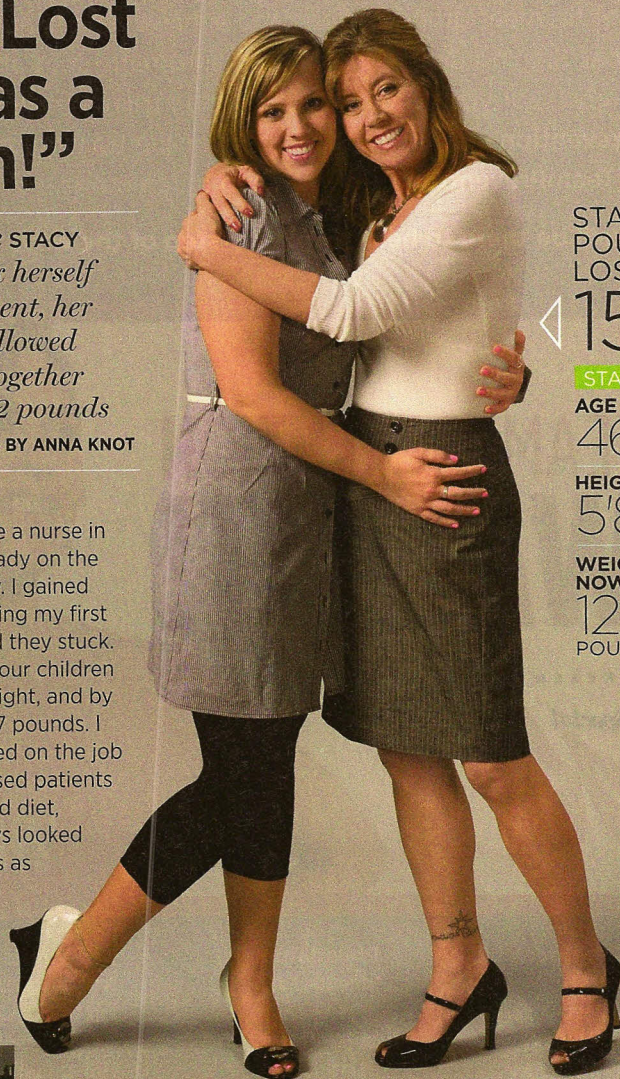
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNA KNOT

## MY STORY

When I became a nurse in 1981, I was already on the road to obesity. I gained 80 pounds during my first pregnancy, and they stuck. With my next four children came more weight, and by 2006 I'd hit 277 pounds. I felt embarrassed on the job because I advised patients on nutrition and diet, and they always looked at me sideways as if to say, “Yeah sure, I can see how well you follow your own advice.”



WEIGHT  
THEN  
◀ 277



STACY'S  
POUNDS  
LOST

◀ 152

STATS

AGE

46

HEIGHT

5'8"

WEIGHT  
NOW

125  
POUNDS



They were right to scoff. With my long hours, my meals frequently came from vending machines—M&M's, doughnuts, and soda. I knew my diet was unhealthy, but I was ashamed, and I relied on food to conceal my emotional pain.

#### AN UNKIND LEGACY

By the time I was 35 years old, I had high blood pressure and diabetes. I was going to have to start injecting insulin. My doctor said my only hope of getting healthy was with bariatric surgery. That was the wake-up call I needed. As a nurse, I refused to believe it was my only option. Plus, my second-youngest child, Payton, who was 13 at the time and 60 pounds overweight, was picking up my bad habits and insecurities. So in December 2006, we decided to change our lives together.

#### WEIGHT LOSS, FAMILY STYLE

Payton and I became avid readers of nutrition books, magazines, and Web sites. We collected new recipes and combed the supermarket aisles seeking smart substitutions: We traded whole milk for fat-free, white rice for brown, and soda for water. To ward off hunger, we ate small meals every 3 hours.

After 4 months, Payton and I began exercising. At first, we'd walk several blocks and return home huffing and puffing. But by the end of the summer, we were walking 5 miles at a stretch.

In just 2 years, I went from a size 24 to a size 4. I no longer need medication for high blood pressure or diabetes, and I have loads of energy. Best of all, 60 pounds lighter, Payton is healthier and more confident. Watching her blossom has been the biggest reward of all.

—Reported by Rachel Aydt



## MY TOP TIPS

#### Sneak in good deeds and exercise.

My family "pays it forward" by helping neighbors with odd jobs—mowing lawns, raking leaves, and shoveling snow—that also keep us active.

**Keep experimenting.** Payton and I try new recipes often, and they've led us to new favorites: Spaghetti squash is the perfect pasta impostor.

**Pack in the produce.** I up my intake of fruits and veggies by eating at least one portion at every meal. Since I eat every 3 hours, the servings really add up.

**Make food count...is my motto.** Saying it out loud reminds me to eat in moderation and savor every bite.

**Be like a mail carrier.** Rain or shine, I exercise. When my husband wants to go out to dinner, I lace up my sneakers and meet him there. Walking has not only lowered my blood sugar but also boosted my energy and my mood.



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