

By Brandon Hopper

Sandy Vickerman wasn't in a good place. The 40-year-old mother lacked happiness, confidence and a waist line she was proud of. No matter what she did, she couldn't seem to keep any weight off.

A friend convinced Vickerman to contact Fremont Regional Health & Wellness Team's Sarah Ley about a program called Lose 2 Gain. The program partnered with Cañon City Community Fitness to offer a discounted rate for the 10-week program.

"Sarah let me join, even though I was already a week late," Vickerman said. "... I decided to make a commitment to myself that I was going to do the best I could, and I knew the only person who could do this was me. I was given an awesome opportunity and I wanted to take full advantage of it."

Vickerman didn't start with a certain goal in mind, but she was determined to do everything she could to change her lifestyle. She said the right opportunity presented itself at the right time and she knew hard work would result in positive changes.

At first, it was hard work to just show up to the workout, but that quickly escalated into a desire to show up.

"Working out was my 'me time' and such a great stress reliever," she said, adding that thinking of anything else during that day's workout was impossible, so it was easy to stay focused.

Vickerman is the Preschool Special Education Clerk at the ECHO Office at the ACCESS Center for the school district. She's been in the position for almost two years. Vickerman said she'd typically go work out after getting off work to burn off the day's stress before going home to enjoy family time.

"I feel it was easier to continue because I felt and saw results almost immediately," Vickerman said. "I seemed to have motivation all around me, too. So many people at my church said it seemed like the weight just melted off me. I found a lot of inspiration and motivation from pins on Pinterest. Also, just the positive comments and encouraging words from all the amazing people I know at the school district, and now at the gym made it easier and easier."

Soon after starting, Vickerman saw a post on Pinterest that hit home for her. It said, "I exercise because somehow completely exhausting myself is the most relaxing part of my day."



As the weight started melting off, Vickerman kept going strong throughout the 10-week program. Before the program began, Vickerman reached almost 193 pounds. Recently she weighed in at 147 pounds, losing almost 24 percent of her body weight (46 pounds). Her Body Mass Index went from 30.2 to 23, and her body fat percentage went from 35.8 to 22.8.

As fun as it is to look at the measurables, Vickerman said, the best part was having to clean out her closet twice this summer because she had so many clothes that didn't fit anymore.



"I am happy, healthy and blessed beyond words," Vickerman said. "I feel so good. I feel strong and confident and want to push myself, just to know for myself what I can do. I am able to play with my daughters and not get winded after just a few minutes. My 9-year-old has told me more than once when we are just walking around, 'Mom, will you slow down? You're speed walking!' I just really enjoy life.

"I am the most proud of all the new friends I have made. They are my amazing crossfit family – really encouraging even now that I have been doing this for eight months. I also feel so proud when I run into someone I know and they say I look amazing – that makes me feel even more amazing and motivated to keep making positive, productive choices."

Ley is an assistant regional wellness coordinator and ran the program from the wellness team's end last year.

"Sandy's change is amazing and we're all so proud of her. It's truly incredible to see what people can accomplish when they have the desire," Ley said. "Sandy's might have been the biggest change we've seen through the Lose 2 Gain program, but we've watched so many district employees and their family members make extremely positive strides toward becoming the healthier person they want to be."

Jen and Brian Vanlwarden, teachers at Cañon City High School and owners of Cañon City Community Fitness, decided to continue offering the program with a discounted rate to school district employees and their families.

"It is always awesome to see someone like Sandy start the program not knowing what to expect and come out as a stronger, fitter, and more confident version of herself," Brian Vanlwarden said. "Sandy is a testament to the positive results you can make in your life if you are committed to improving your overall health and fitness."