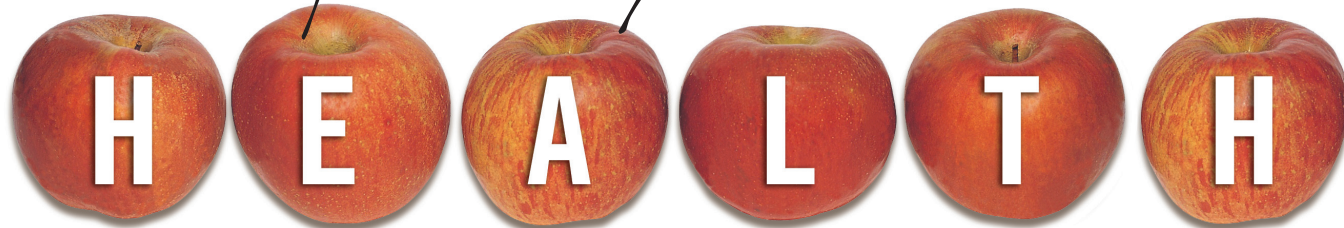


# How I Improved My



Inspiring stories of  
how you took control  
of your health

## I walked with Goliath

The absolute best thing I ever did for my health was to keep one of the four puppies from a beagle dog that just showed up and then got pregnant.

Goliath's daddy was half chow, half St. Bernard, and this dog would change my life.



He was a teenager when I hurt my back at work and lost my job. I have never been the same since. Dr. Bennett told me I had to try to walk every day, but I couldn't walk down the driveway. One day my daughter said, "Why don't you take Goliath and he can pull you?" I did, and he pulled me when I couldn't go.

He healed my body and my soul, and soon we were walking at Kerr Scott Dam. We then walked many of the trails up on the Blue Ridge Parkway and even the hardest trails at Stone Mountain State Park. He quit pulling years ago, but by then I could pull myself.

Dr. Jackson at the Animal Hospital of Wilkes hated to tell me back in May that Goliath had cancer and wouldn't last the summer. We took a few special walks after that, but he limped and panted so bad that we quit going. I haven't walked since, and I'm having back trouble again.

He passed away this past week, taking a nap in the backyard. I realize that when spring touches the trees here in the foothills, those walking trails will call to me. Thanks to Goliath it's in my blood now. And I think, maybe, by then it might be time to find another puppy. If it doesn't come find me first.

*Gwen Owens, Moravian Falls | EnergyUnited*

## I warm up

As a diabetic, I run and lift weights every morning to keep my weight down and control my blood sugar. But I've found a collateral benefit: I rarely get sick. I think my daily workout raises the body temperature enough to kill germs before they can get a good start. My wife's mother, a Prussian, used to wrap the children in blankets so they would sweat out their colds. I think my workout accomplishes the same thing. It mimics a mild fever.

*Frank Laffitte, Fayetteville | South River EMC*

## I met my wife

I happily admit that my health has improved because I took my wife's advice. Before I met this wonderful woman, I suffered constantly with respiratory problems because I had whooping cough when I was a kid. Shortly after our engagement she remarked that I needed to take vitamins. When I asked her why, she said, "Because you catch colds too often, and they linger for months." Honestly, I was so head over heels for her that I might have taken anything she told me to take. Lo and behold, I found out she was right! I don't catch colds so easily anymore. After 17 years of marriage, my wife still reads about herbal teas, vitamins and other health products. Then she adds them to our diet when she thinks we need them. I thank God for my wife. Because of her I enjoy very good health.

*Brian Barrett, Rocky Point | Four County EMC*

## We go outdoors

The Blue Ridge Mountains have provided my friends and me with the inspiration to improve our health. With all of the grandeur and beauty surrounding us, it hardly feels like a workout to take our dogs for a hike. However, we know that these weekly strolls are keeping us fit and healthy.

This photograph was taken on a nice summer day on a trail off of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The peacefulness sensed in this photo reminds one of days past. No horns honking, no phones ringing—only the beautiful sounds of nature. So these trips to the forest have become our way of staying healthy—both physically and mentally. The power of nature never ceases to amaze me.



*Jessica Waggoner, Boone | Blue Ridge Electric*

*Thanks to everyone who sent us stories and pictures. You can see more at our Web site. Next month we'll publish stories of people in your family who made history of one kind or another. (Deadline was Dec. 15). See more themes and the rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series on page 20.*

## I disciplined myself

When I moved to Hayesville from my mountaintop in Glenville, I was using a cane and could hardly walk from room to room. I decided to do something about it, despite the fact that I am 82-years-old!



Now, daily I walk with my dog to the mailbox. I do more and more chores around the house. I started to eat properly, lost 10 pounds and I ride a stationary bike each day.

I moved here July 13. Now in November I feel safe without the cane, though I take it to town! I sleep better, and everyone is amazed how much better I walk. It takes daily discipline to “just do it,” but it works.

*Rosena M. Snyder, Hayesville | Blue Ridge Mountain EMC*

## I quit smoking

I was a cigarette smoker for 24 years, but thank God I found the courage to quit now for the last five. At the time I was smoking, I would get up in the morning coughing, and I always kept a cold.

One time I had to have some tests done at our local hospital for some minor surgery I was having. The anesthetist showed me a picture of my lungs, which were nothing but pitch-blackness. He told me if I quit smoking it would take three years for my lungs to clear up. It got to a point that smoking was dominating my body. So I decided to quit smoking COLD TURKEY! That is the only way to do it. If you cut back it won't work. I started noticing that not only was my taste better, but I actually could smell things. I hadn't even realized that I had lost my sense of smell. My skin complexion even looked better.

This is how I improved my health, and I feel great.

*Nancy Marlette, Newport | Carteret-Craven EC*

## I laugh with friends

Friends. Plain and simple!

As a group of 13 college sorority friends, we gather twice a year for fun and oh-so-much laughter. A week at the beach and a long weekend in the mountains each year remind us that our hearts are forever bonded to each other. What makes it all so amazing is that this has been going on for 31 years!

We all recognize the importance of laughter and love to one's health—not to mention the emotional support we offer each other throughout our days. We have encountered cancer, divorce, births, deaths, miscarriages, heart surgery and the list goes on; but we never fail to support each other.

After each gathering we all feel refreshed and renewed knowing we are supported and cared for. We realize that emotional health is truly a tangent of one's physical well being.

I love my girlfriends, and I will forever cherish the spirit of friendship.

*Jean Forrest Brooks, Hillsborough | Piedmont EMC*

## I followed the doctor's orders

Problems with my heart were diagnosed when I was 48 years old. My doctor prescribed medicine and told me to walk a mile every day. I walked a mile every day for many years except when it was pouring rain, snowing or below freezing. I took the prescribed medicine.

A few years later my total cholesterol was 315. My doctor told me to go on a low-fat diet. I did, and still follow it. At 62 I applied for Social Security, thinking I wouldn't live to be 65.

At 70 I had radio frequency catheter ablation to “fix” my heart rhythm.

At 76 I am still on the low-fat diet, still taking prescribed medicine, and my cholesterol is normal. I can no longer walk a mile a day, but I get plenty of exercise taking care of my husband, myself and our house.

I believe following doctor's orders greatly improved my health. If I had not, I probably wouldn't be here today.

*Virginia Kinley, Woodleaf | EnergyUnited*

## I took control

I have been overweight all my life. I have always been picked on, teased and made to feel that I would always be overweight. As I grew up, I was labeled morbidly obese. I was terrified. I knew I always felt tired and had no energy, but I wasn't sure why. It took awhile for it to really sink in that I was killing myself by eating so much. I used to be in denial about what I ate, how much I ate and the effect it was having on my life.



Since then I have come to realize that I have control. I can change things, and there is a way out. I have lost 98 pounds. Looking at your BMI and what that means is a very sobering experience. When I saw what it meant to be morbidly obese and the health risks, it put it all into perspective. I want to see my kids grown. I want to do what I can to see that I have a happy life. I'm worth it. I can be healthier and happier!

*Diane Caudill, Roaring River | Surry-Yadkin EMC*

## I do the small things

I started drinking water with my lunch and dinner instead of sweet tea or sodas. Also, I got a German shepherd dog that I must walk every morning and evening (or he will look at me with those sad eyes and whimper—it makes my heart melt). I also get up 20 minutes earlier each workday so I can use my “Ab Lounge” and “Total Gym” for 10 to 15 minutes before work. All these small things add up to keep my weight down and my health good.

Oh, and one last thing. Throughout the day I say silent prayers of thanks for all the blessings and good things in my life. I must name at least five things for which I'm thankful. Positive thinking makes every day better.

*Sherry McQuage, Laurinburg | Lumbee River EMC*

## I had children



I improved my health by having children. I have two boys, and they are 11 months apart. They were both born in 2003—one in January and the other in December. I get in my exercise each day by running, jumping, dancing, playing at the park, etc. I laugh a lot. I never used to watch what I ate before I had kids, but now I look at all the nutritional facts before buying something. I buy and consume more fresh fruit than I ever did before my boys were born. I am also careful to see that we all get (or come close to) the recommended amounts from the food groups.

My boys have made me healthier as a result of all the changes that came with them. I am so grateful for them in every way.

*Robin Barnes, West End | Randolph EMC*

## I teach aerobics

Several years ago I moved from central Florida to the very small town of Hertford in Perquimans County. I am health conscious and I have always enjoyed the motivation of group fitness classes and the friends I have made while attending aerobics classes. So I sought out an exercise class to try to maintain the fairly active lifestyle that I was accustomed to in Florida. To my disbelief there were no group fitness classes in Hertford.

One day I was thumbing through the newspaper and noticed an ad that read “aerobics instructor wanted, no experience necessary.” I contacted the number in the ad (which ended up being the local recreation department) and was advised that if I obtained my certification to teach aerobics I could begin teaching classes for the recreation department. I was delighted!

Eight years later I am still teaching fitness classes twice a week in Hertford and once a week at a recreation department in the neighboring county. I am the most fit I have ever been, able to run 5K and 8K races which were always beyond my limits. Best of all I get the opportunity to encourage others to stay active.

*LeAnne Hamilton, Hertford | Albemarle EMC*

## Have a good attitude

I am submitting this picture of our 2-year-old grandson, Nathan Wayne Johnson of Greensboro. He is enjoying a doughnut at the neighborhood Fourth of July flag raising event. Might not have improved his health, but boy, his attitude was good.

*Anita Adcock, Fayetteville | South River EMC*



## I reduced my cholesterol

“Young man, your cholesterol is too high, especially considering your age and heredity. I’ll see you again in three months.” I had heard such warnings from other doctors, but this doctor required accountability: “See you in three months.”

Age 39 is young by coronary standards, and my cholesterol level of 245 certainly exceeded the threshold of 200. What about heredity? Not good. Both sets of grandparents had heart attacks. Dad had heart surgery in his early 60s. Mom died of heart failure at age 74.

So where do I begin? It started with the book “Eater’s Choice” by Dr. Ron Goor. The book’s premise was simple: You lower cholesterol by lowering your intake of saturated fats. That book became my “bible” for the next 90 days.

- No beef or pork. Only chicken, turkey, seafood.
- Nothing deep-fried (sauté in olive oil).
- Use fat-free dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.).
- Exercise aerobically three times a week.

The results? Three months later my cholesterol was 187. One year later it was 186. Another year later it was 166. And after three years I’m also 25 pounds lighter! People constantly ask, “Are you still dieting?” It’s not a diet. It’s a way of life.

Thank you, Dr. Craig Hoffmeier, for holding me accountable. 🙏

*Loren Kurtz, Franklinton | Wake EMC*

## Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we’ll send you \$50. You don’t have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

### March 2006

#### Why I’m a Gardener

The real reason you tend a garden.

*Deadline: Jan. 15*

### April 2006

#### A Perfect Site for a Picnic

Send us your pictures and stories about the best picnic place in North Carolina.

*Deadline: Feb. 15*

### May 2006

#### The Ugliest Lamp I Ever Saw

Send us the pictures.

*Deadline: March 15*

### June 2006

#### The Best Summer I Ever Had

By kids age 16 and younger.

*Deadline: April 15*

### The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can’t pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don’t agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616  
Or by e-mail: [finer@carolinacountry.com](mailto:finer@carolinacountry.com)  
Or through the Web: [www.carolinacountry.com](http://www.carolinacountry.com)