

THE MOUNTAINEER

Overweight youth camp worked for one teen boy

Waynesville, NC Mountaineer

January 9, 2006

by PEGGY MANNING | Senior staff writer

While the General Assembly has adopted bills for better nutrition standards for children, Healthy Haywood made its contribution by sponsoring a Tuscola student at an eight-week weight-loss program.

Daniel Sutton, a 16-year-old junior at Tuscola High School, lost 43 pounds during his stay from June through August at the Wellspring Camp, located at Camp Hope in the Cruso community.

"I weighed 319 pounds when I went to Wellspring, and I weighed 263 pounds at the end of the eight weeks," Sutton said.

Losing only about eight percent of his body weight may not seem like much, but Sutton was especially happy that he went from a size 52 waist to size 42.

"I figured it would be a good experience and I could hang out with kids who were having the same problem with their weight," he said. Sutton's weight problems began when he was 11 years old, he said, at the same time he began spending more time on the couch, watching television and eating junk food.

As he grew older, he began to eat a lot of fast foods like cheeseburgers and French fries. "My mom always cooked a lot of vegetables, but I'd turn around and eat a cheeseburger on top of my regular dinner," Sutton said.

"Now, it makes me sick to even smell fast food restaurants," he said.

Counselors at Wellspring taught Sutton and other campers proper nutrition and exercise. Sutton eats a low-fat breakfast and packs a lunch to take to school, which includes lean meats, fruit and bottled water.

Now that he has lost 43 pounds, Sutton said he is motivated to continue healthy eating habits and to get as much exercise as possible to keep the weight off.

"I now go to the recreation center as much as I can, and I am walking more. I get up and move," Sutton said.

He is very appreciative to the Healthy Haywood group for sponsoring him at the first Wellspring camp.

"I think it was great, and I'd do it again," Sutton said. "The people at the camp are great motivators. It's made me feel better, and I have better self-esteem."

The cost of the Wellspring sessions was \$4,350 and includes lodging and meals; equipment, which participants keep after completing the program; and three months of follow-up care by phone and Internet, said Ryan Madamba, camp director.

Campers lose an average of four to five pounds per week with the low-fat, high-protein, high-fiber menu and are able to sustain that weight loss, Madamba said.

Nearly three out of 10 Haywood County children are overweight, and one in six is obese, according to surveys conducted by Healthy Haywood, a spinoff of the state Healthy Carolinians effort founded by former Gov. Jim Hunt in 1992 to address health issues.