

## Weight-loss camps invite families to come along

By VALERIE BAUMAN – 5 hours ago

PAUL SMITHS, N.Y. (AP) — It took Kelsey Galer four weeks at a weight-loss camp to lose 9 pounds. It took her dad just three days to start acting like a "dork."

"He wears his pedometer around all the time," said Galer. "He's just really into it with the family workshop he went to."

Her weight-loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk.

For her father, Michael Galer, and 16-year-old sister, Kyla, that meant a three-day family workshop at the end of Kelsey's stay at Wellspring Camp for young women in New York's Adirondack Mountains.

They got an induction into the 18-year-old's new, healthier lifestyle. Her father found himself doing aerobics and using a stability ball for yoga during the family session. Her sister cheered as Kelsey climbed to the top of a towering pine tree and flew down a zip-line.

Back home in Canton, Mass., the whole family has been reaping the benefits: her father lost 8 pounds, and now Kyla joins her at the gym. Within days, they were planning healthier grocery lists.

Wellspring is one of several weight-loss camps that add some family participation to the standard menu of exercise and healthy diets. Wellspring's camp in Pinehurst, N.C., and the Pritikin program in Aventura, Fla., offer programs that include family members for the entire camp session.

But all that attention comes at a price: Roughly \$5,000 to \$9,000, depending on the camp and length of stay.

At the Adirondack camp, visiting family members join campers in



Wellspring Camp participant Kelsey Galer, center, her sister Kyla Galer, left, and camper Amanda Sapera sing to encourage another camper to overcome her fear of the ropes course in Paul Smiths, N.Y., Thursday, July 18, 2008. Kelsey's weight loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)



Kelsey Galer flies through the air on the ropes course at Wellspring Camp in Paul Smiths, N.Y., Thursday, July 18, 2008. Her weight loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)

the mornings for a long walk and at every meal. The rest of the time, parents attend classes on cooking, exercise and how to shop for healthy food. Siblings can tag along with campers to watch the daily activities.

"That had a big impression on her," Kelsey Galer said of her sister's visit to camp. "She just got a taste of my new lifestyle. We had spent a lot of time together (before camp), but it was never time like that — being active and eating healthy."

The results of a three-year Wellspring survey of campers suggests that family support is beneficial, according to Daniel Kirschenbaum, Wellspring clinical director. The campers who reported having strong family support or used the post-camp program did better at maintaining or continuing to lose weight than those without strong support.

At the Wellspring camp in Pinehurst, N.C., about 60 miles southwest of Raleigh, parents join children between the ages of 5 and 14 for sessions that include sports, personal training and a spa.

Therapy is part of both programs to help people understand why they overeat and how to manage stress. Parents learn how to motivate their children to be healthy instead of discouraging them or emphasizing bad body image.

Dr. Chris Bolling, who heads the weight loss program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, said fat is a family affair.

"You have to model good behavior," he said. "We know this for all sorts of behavior in kids. You don't tell kids to do one thing and then do something else ... kids, very quickly, pick up on it when their parents aren't practicing what they're preaching."

The Pritikin Program near Miami offers a family camp that promotes exercise and a diet emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, seafood, nonfat dairy foods, and limited lean meat. Children also take cooking classes and go on field trips to learn about things like finding healthy options at the mall.

Priscilla Marquard has taken her triplets — 12-year-olds Caroline, Alex and Audrey — to the Pritikin family camp each summer for the past three years. The girls have always been a healthy weight, but she saw it as an opportunity to reinforce healthy habits as a family.

"You can really put them in a room full of unhealthy food, somehow they're going to find a way to eat healthy," said Marquard, of Orlando, Fla.



Kelsey Galer, second from right, has lunch with her father Michael, left, and sister Kyla, right, at Wellspring Camp in Paul Smiths, N.Y., Thursday, July 18, 2008. Kelsey's weight loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)



Kelsey Galer eyes the ropes course at Wellspring Camp in Paul Smiths, N.Y., Thursday, July 18, 2008. Her weight loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)

Her daughter Audrey concurs: "I loved Oreos, and now I can't even look at that stuff."

Kelsey Galer had tried to lose weight before by exercising but without much success. The 5-foot teenager started camp at 170 pounds and lost about 9 pounds in a month. About three weeks after leaving camp, she had dropped 12 more pounds. She has followed up with the camp, logging her food intake, exercise and weight online. She can also reach out to counselors if she needs additional help or motivation.

She said the support has helped her stay on track and get ready for college in the fall.

"It would have been a lot harder. I probably would have had a really hard time sticking to the diet and staying motivated," she said. "It's really good to know that other people want you to succeed."



Wellspring Camp participant Kelsey Galer takes part in the ropes course in Paul Smiths, N.Y., Thursday, July 18, 2008. Her weight loss camp and others are inviting mom, dad and siblings to share the camp experience so they can help campers stay motivated when they return home where unhealthy temptations and habits lurk. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)