



## Healthy future in store for teen: Drops 166 lbs.

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EXETER - At 10 pounds, six ounces, Terry Henry was born a big boy. By preschool, Terry's teachers had to bring in a high school desk to accommodate his size, which was more than twice that of his classmates. By age 10, his weight had burgeoned to more than 200 pounds. Last summer, at age 16, 6-foot 1-inch Terry tipped the scales at 581 pounds.

Last fall, Terry, whose family lives in Exeter, enrolled at the Academy of the Sierras, a therapeutic boarding school for overweight teens in Reedley, Calif. Since September, Terry has lost an impressive 121 pounds. Over the summer, Terry had shed 45 pounds at a camp for overweight kids, for a total weight loss of 166 pounds in six months..

But attendance at the academy is not just about losing. Its focus is more on gaining, both the knowledge and the confidence it takes to achieve and sustain weight loss. And Terry says he is learning, for the first time in his life, how to really control his weight.



Terry Henry is surrounded by family in this recent portrait: sister Michelle Henry, left, top row, mother Lily Henry and Terry, and below sister Jillian Kahn and her child Jaden.

"I have a new outlook on being overweight," said Terry. "I believe a fat person doesn't have to be fat. You choose to be fat. If you don't want to be fat, you can do something about it."

For Terry, that something includes the commitment to live, year-round, 3,000 miles away from his family in an environment that stresses academics, physical activity, training in nutrition and the culinary arts and cognitive and behavioral therapy.

Terry's mother, Lily Henry, said the decision to send Terry to the school was a last resort.

"We had discussed bypass surgery, but were scared of the complications, of the risks outweighing the benefits."

Lily said she was concerned about sending her son so far away, but realized if he didn't go, his life could be at stake.

"He huffed and puffed just walking a block," she said. He had also become withdrawn and depressed, and although he had always been a good student, had missed a lot of school last year as a result.

"As a mother, you blame yourself," said Lily. She recalled Terry's first pediatrician, who accused her of poor parenting. She changed doctors when Terry was 10, and his new pediatrician referred him to an endocrinologist. A thyroid imbalance was diagnosed, and Terry will be medicated for it for the rest of his life.

Though she felt somewhat vindicated by the diagnosis, Lily acknowledged that denial plays into obesity.

"You watch this sort of thing on Oprah, then you see it before your own eyes, see it in your own son."

Lily said that when Terry weighed in at 581 pounds this summer at the beginning of camp, it was "really shocking for him. He wouldn't tell us at first how much he weighed." Now, he faces facts and talks openly about his situation.

### **Behavior therapy key**

Cognitive-behavioral therapy is the linchpin of the program at the Academy of the Sierras, and students have four to seven therapy sessions each week. In addition to the self-monitoring strategies they develop, academy students are counseled on other issues such as the low self-esteem, depression and anxiety that are common accompaniments to obesity.

Nutrition education is another key component, and Terry said he has learned to keep his diet as fat-free and low-cal as possible. Because he is so big, he is allotted 1,400 calories a day rather than the usual 1,200. He eats three meals and three healthy snacks each day.

Terry's mom bought him a digital food scale when he came home for Thanksgiving, as the academy has taught him to measure and weigh all food before he eats it. This is especially important for Terry who said, "I lack that thing in my brain that tells people whether they're full or not. Even though I'm looking for signals now, I still don't have them."

The academy also brings students to restaurants to give them practice ordering. When Terry and his family went out to a steakhouse over the holidays, Terry asked for his meat without sauce, the mushrooms grilled rather than sautéed and made sure the mashed potatoes were real.

"He helps me to order now," said Lily.

Terry's culinary arts class is one of his favorites, and Lily bragged about the dinner he cooked for the family on Christmas: ham, butternut squash, pea salad, broccoli and string beans. She said, "I take him to the grocery store with me and he teaches me better methods of cooking."

### **Important to be honest**

Terry said that being honest with himself makes a big difference. For example, when he went to the movies recently with his family, he refused to hold his mother's candy for her, as he wasn't sure he could trust himself not to eat it. He said, "I've learned not to lie to myself."

Terry is also enjoying sports like never before. "I can actually do them now," he explained. He likes the fact that a huge variety of physical activities are offered at the academy, and particularly enjoys dodge ball and street hockey. Terry thinks the variety at the academy is one reason for its success. "At summer weight loss camp, it was the same things over and over."

All students at the academy start the day with a three-mile walk or a swim, and work out with a personal trainer two times a week. Terry says he has increased his strength by five times since he began working out in September.

Owing to his huge weight loss, Lily had to buy Terry all new clothes at Thanksgiving and said he'll need a new wardrobe again soon. Terry, who was dressed in black, with piercings on his eyebrows and ears, and a dog chain around his neck said, "People put me in the Goth group. I call myself a freak. I intimidate people by my size and style."

Terry said making people scared of him was one of his coping strategies for dealing with kids (and adults) who picked on him over the years for being fat. His other strategy was "to make jokes about myself. I'd say the things they wanted to say first."

The darkness suggested by Terry's style of dress is belied by his honesty and ease in conversation, and by his good sense of humor.

### **'...a different human being'**

When he arrived home for his first holiday, Lilly Henry said, "I felt like I had an impostor for a son. He's a totally different human being now." She said she used to have to bug him about what he was eating or getting him to do things. These days, she said, "Sometimes I have to remind him to eat. And we're more active. He's wearing me out."

The Henrys attended First Night festivities in Portsmouth this year, an activity that would not have been possible for Terry in the past owing to the amount of walking involved.

Terry's present weight-loss goal is get to 300 pounds or below. Although a young man of his height should typically weigh about 180 pounds, because of his years of significant obesity, Terry knows he will not be able to lose that much.

In addition to his thyroid medication, Terry takes Prevacid for acid-reflux, which is caused by his excess weight. He also has knee problems, which the doctors say will improve, but because of the damage his weight has done, will never entirely go away.

A sophomore, Terry is looking forward to the winter term. In addition to his culinary arts classes, Terry enjoys science, auto mechanics and math, which is his favorite. He's planning on college, and according to the academy, its rigorous academics are designed to put students ahead of where they otherwise would have been when they return to their schools of origin.

### **Progress remarkable**

Ryan Craig, executive director of the Academy of the Sierras, described Terry's progress as remarkable.

"Terry's on track to be an appropriate weight. He demonstrates the maturity, organizational skills and discipline needed to succeed."

When he entered the academy last fall, Terry said he was depressed about all of the weight he had to lose and worried that he would be the largest kid there. Now, Terry is looking forward to mentoring new students who will be joining the school for the first time in the winter term.

Terry said, "I know now I can do it. There's no reason to hide."