

DIVISION 2, 2ND PLACE

I have to start my success story by thanking GOD for what he has done in my life. The last several years of my life have changed completely. Without my faith, I would not have had the strength to go on. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." The biggest change in my life was losing my husband suddenly with a massive heart attack. I felt like my whole world had come to an end. I was attending TOPS during this difficult time and had lost 50-60 lbs. My husband was my greatest supporter, my fan. A week before he passed, Tildon surprised me with 2 outfits to celebrate my weight loss. He was so proud of me.

The day Tildon passed, I began to have chest pain and could not breathe. My family wanted me to go to hospital but I refused. Then my son said, "Mom we have lost our Dad, we do not want to lose you too." I did go to the hospital. I had a heart attack that day. As the years went by, I regained the weight I had lost and then some. My heart condition was controlled by medication, but by October 008, I had regained so much weight, the medication was not enough. I could not walk short distances without having chest pain and becoming short of breath. The extra weight was taxing my heart. I needed a heart stent which was done on October 3, 2008. The stent made me stop and really think. I needed to lose weight for my health. I was so unhappy; I didn't want to go anywhere. I then thought of what my son had said to me --- we do not want to lose you too.

I realized I needed help to lose weight. I wanted to be around for my sons, Jimmy and David, my daughter-in-laws, Mary and Tammy and my 5 grand – children. I wanted to see them grow, graduate, marry and have children. I needed to change! They are what I live for. If I didn't lose weight, I would not be around to care for them and love them. It was time to rejoin TOPS.

I first joined TOPS 34 years ago and lost 100 lbs. A beautiful Christian woman named Edith Brown introduced me to TOPS. Edith had since passed, but her spirit lives on in our hearts. I know she is cheering us on. When I say us, I mean my very best friend, Judy, Edith's daughter, and myself. Judy is not only my TOPS buddy but my sister-in-law and best friend since high school .

I belong to TOPS #IN 1004, Speedway and they are a wonderful group of men and women. Very supportive, when you lose they cheer, and when you gain it's ok, you will do better next week. The dedicated officers work very hard, give their time freely to make our group successful and I thank them very much. I also cannot forget the weight scale in my journey of success. I know every week I have to face it. Knowing someone else is going to weigh me in helps me a lot. I cannot do it on my own. I know TOPS is the answer and it's a wonderful chapter to belong to.

During my journey the last 34 years with my weight fluctuating, I have come to realize when I reach my goal I would return to my old eating habits. Then the weight gain would begin. I have finally realized weight loss has to be a lifetime commitment, a mind and body change. If I gain 5-10 lbs., I need stop right there and lose it. I can enjoy dinners with friends and family, I just need to eat smaller portions, make healthier choices. I also need add an exercise program at least 3 times a week to strengthen my muscles and tone them. I dislike exercising but feel much better for having done it. Changing my attitude about food, diet and exercise have been the hardest part of my journey. However, the weight loss, encouragement from family, my TOPS group have made my journey so much more enjoyable and worthwhile.

Thank you GOD, Edith, Judy, family and TOPS for supporting me through this wonderful journey of life

Carol Shields