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Lifestyles

Style, substance: Chicago women weigh in

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BY [CHERYL V. JACKSON](#) Staff Reporter

Look at the difference a year can make. Three Chicago area women strutted their stuff before cameras this week, after allowing us to follow their weight loss programs through the year. (A fourth, Natasha Haymon, moved to California during the year.)

All lost weight -- some regained, some fell off their diets. They had to deal with being thrown off of good eating and regular exercise from changing jobs, getting married and having guests and kids at home. But they're recommitted to getting back on track.

As a reward for their hard work, the Image Studios provided new dos and faces, and Forth & Towne dressed them to make the most of their new figures.

SUSAN SAWYER-SCHLINK

Age: 29
Height: 5'1"
Start weight: 155 pounds
Goal: 125 pounds
Actual loss: 23 pounds

The Chicago newlywed, who was successful in meeting her goal of getting into her size 10 wedding dress this fall, is about 132 pounds now -- having gained a bit with the holidays.

A new job took her out of a routine and "I still haven't figured out when would be a good time to go to the gym and work it into my schedule," she said.

She stopped going to the gym in September just before the wedding. But she says she'll go back -- there's that two-year gym membership she's still paying.

LISA CUSUMANO

Age: 40
Height: 5'
Start weight: 199 pounds
Goal: 140 pounds

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SUSAN SAWYER-SCHLINK



Actual loss: About 15 pounds

The Carol Stream mother of five cried when she saw the recent season finale of "The Biggest Loser" weight loss reality TV show. She thought, "They did it; why couldn't I?"

"I sat there in tears. Once again I have failed at this whole routine," she said.

Cusumano, who has tried a long list of diets over the past 20 years, did well on her 2005 program -- a combo of Weight Watchers and regular trips to the gym -

June, she'd dropped 31 pounds. - for about five months. By

Then relatives came for an extended visit and the kids were out of school, throwing off her eating and workout routines. She never recovered. She hasn't been on a scale or to a Weight Watchers meeting in months, but she figures she's put on about 15 pounds and can feel body aches return with the weight. She guesses she is now about 183.

Still, she's not giving up. Cusumano said she hit the gym once or twice a week last month. And she's working with three other women to share the cost of a personal trainer.



LUCY FRANCIS

LUCY FRANCIS

Age: 54

Height: 5'6"

Start weight: 173 pounds

Goal: 150 pounds

Actual loss: 18 pounds

Lucy Francis was a veritable poster child for healthy eating and exercise, even under the stress of looking for a new job. She'd pack sandwiches. She'd seek out low-fat, affordable takeout foods. She'd arrive at job interviews early enough to get in a walk. But, when summer arrived, she gave in to summertime picnic foods. She ordered pizza for herself and buddies who helped her move into a new place. She let her expensive gym membership lapse. And she wasn't going near a scale.

But she's bouncing back. Recently, she began the process to become recertified as an aerobics instructor.

At about 155, she's 5 pounds shy of her goal, but she's happy overall with the results.

NATASHA HAYMON

Age: 30

Start weight: 141 pounds

Goal: 129 pounds (reached in March)

Actual loss: 15 pounds

A busy Natasha is working in Los Angeles. The studio production assistant is holding at 126 pounds, maintaining her weight by snacking on fruit during the day, walking and taking salsa classes. She swims nightly with her two daughters.