



## **Taking off the '06 pounds, No shortage of weight loss options in East Valley**

*By Angela De Welles, Independent Newspapers*

It is probably safe to guess what topped the list of resolutions made by most Americans this New Year.

According to recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics, about 66 percent of U.S. adults are overweight or obese and for many, Jan. 1 might be the start of a healthy, new lifestyle.

A profitable weight loss industry is ready and waiting for those wanting to change and looking for help.

Weight loss options abound everywhere, including the East Valley, where gyms are moving in and other surgical options also are becoming more available close to home.

Thomas Schmidt, a marketing director for Anytime Fitness, notices a definite influx of gym joiners around the first of the year.

“The first two months of the year, people have the best intentions,” he said.

But inexperience is one factor that can make it difficult to achieve results.

“A lot of people when they go to the gym know they should be there ... but they have no idea where to start,” said Mr. Schmidt, adding Anytime Fitness provides new members with private sessions with a personal trainer. “With any kind of program, it’s nice to have that support. That support is absolutely crucial.”

Anytime Fitness has 11 Arizona locations, including one in Mesa at Ellsworth and Guadalupe roads; Pinal County at Bella Vista and Hunt Highway, as well as locations in Chandler at Ray and McQueen roads and Riggs and McQueen roads.

According to Mr. Schmidt, the plan is to open 14 more Arizona gyms next year, including one near Gilbert’s Power Ranch community.



**Jeremy Kleen of San Tan Heights, works out at the Copper Basin YMCA, 28300 N. Main Street.**Independent Newspapers/Angela De Welles

Cyndy Campbell owns a Curves fitness facility in Gold Canyon, 5301 Superstition Mountain Drive, and also notices a jump in membership around the first of the year, as well as during the summer months.

She believes self determination is the key to weight loss.

“I cannot motivate anybody,” Ms. Campbell said. “We give you the tools ... they have to want to do it. They have to want to exercise and lose the pounds.”

Queen Creek resident Jennifer Bradshaw is one of many who had unsuccessfully tried diets and gym memberships.

In late 2005 she decided to go a different route and the looming 2006 New Year holiday was a big motivator.

“(I said) there’s no way I’m going into 2006 over 200 pounds,” Ms. Bradshaw said.

Weighing 243 pounds, Ms. Bradshaw researched her surgical options and decided on the Lap-Band Adjustable Gastric Banding System.

The band was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2001 and is implanted through laparoscopic surgery.

According to the FDA, the inflatable band is placed around the upper stomach to create a small gastric pouch, thus limiting food consumption and creating an earlier feeling of fullness.

The band is intended for people at least 100 pounds overweight and can be adjusted or removed entirely.

Ms. Bradshaw said the Lap-Band is designed to take off pounds at a slower pace compared with the more complex gastric bypass surgery.

After having the surgery Dec. 14, 2005, Ms. Bradshaw has lost 117 pounds so far and has dropped from a size 26 to a six.

“It’s actually been really nice. I feel like a whole different person,” she said.

Her husband has since had the Lap-Band procedure and has experienced similar results. Though the Lap-Band has helped the couple reduce their weight, Ms. Bradshaw said a lot of work and willpower is still involved.

“It’s not just about having the surgery ... it’s also about the support and the maintenance you get from your doctor,” she said, adding the band is simply a tool. Diet and exercise are still needed to achieve weight loss.

John DeBarros, a surgeon at the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, 1492 S. Mill Ave., performs both the Lap-Band procedure and gastric bypass surgery.

Dr. DeBarros said the Lap-Band procedure is gaining popularity and his patients have had much success, losing as much as 60 percent of their excess weight within two years.

But he cautions patients to make sure they are willing to make a lifestyle change.

“Both operations are tools,” he said. “There’s no magic bullet in weight loss ... Even with a bypass you can regain all your weight.”

Ms. Bradshaw had her procedure performed through the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona, which offers patients a variety of tools to help keep the weight off. Exercise physiologists and dieticians help after the surgery, according to Dr. DeBarros.

For those wanting to shed only a few extra pounds, surgery is not an option. Diet and exercise still are the only way to go.

Robert Jones, the owner of Gold Canyon Health and Fitness, 6772 S. Kings Ranch Road, suggests skipping the fad diets.

Mr. Jones said shopping the perimeter of the grocery store, where the fruits, vegetables, protein and bread are located, is the best way to achieve a balanced diet. Adding exercise, including strength, flexibility and aerobics, will help too, he said.

“Diets, in general don’t work ... it’s all about balanced nutrition,” Mr. Jones said.

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forums at [newszap.com](http://newszap.com). News Editor Angela De Welles

can be reached at 497-0048 or [adewelles@newszap.com](mailto:adewelles@newszap.com).