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Nashua Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous to hold special information session for 12-step program

By EMILY HOYT

Staff Writer

The nation's rising obesity rates are leaving many hungry for help, but the Nashua branch of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous has a strategy to satisfy the craving for support.

Nashua FA will hold a public information session featuring its 12-step program for recovery, to combat the rising obesity statistics.

The program works to aid those struggling to maintain a healthy weight and body image.

"My sister had a short bout of bulimia when she was in college, and when she heard me complaining time and time again about how I wanted to lose weight but wasn't able to stop bingeing, she thought FA would work for me, too, because I was constantly either binge eating or starving," said Carol, a school nurse and recovering food addict. "I never had any real freedom from obsession from my body and my weight."

To honor FA's policy on anonymity, Carol asked that her last name be omitted.

The information session, called "If Diets Don't Work For You," is at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Southern New Hampshire Medical Center, West Campus, 29 Northwest Blvd., Nashua. Individuals or family members of those who have struggled with food-related disorders are invited to attend.

"We can have anywhere between 15 and 30 people come, but it's totally anonymous," Carol said. "No one is asked to be weighed, no one has to speak. People just need to come and come with an open mind and see if they identify. And if they do, if they want to start the program, there will be people called sponsors who can guide them in the program."

More than one-third of U.S. adults are obese, and obesity-related conditions, including heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer, are some of the leading causes of preventable death, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Founded in 1998, FA offers a long-term solution to what members describe as "food addiction" – whether experienced as overeating, undereating, bulimia, compulsive exercise, or obsession with body size or food.

Membership is free, according to a FA press release.

FA spans across 40 states in the U.S., Australia, Canada, Germany and England, according to the press release.

In a recent FA membership survey, 49 percent reported being free from addictive eating for 13 months to five years, and many have maintained weight losses from 80 to 100 pounds for more than 20 years.

For Carol, who has been involved in the FA program for 30 years, the support group has helped her re-establish her self-esteem.

"I would say just the knowledge that I wasn't a weak-willed glutton, that I had an addiction that is as respected, so to speak, as alcohol or drugs, and that I never had to be alone again," she said. "I always felt alone and ashamed. That's a really important part of my story, and FA has helped me with that tremendously.

"It continues to be a source of support for me mentally, physically and spiritually."

FA members who have experienced success and long-term recovery will speak at the information session, and the meeting will allow those in need of assistance to achieve help in a private atmosphere, Carol said.

In addition to the information meetings that are held twice a year, FA meetings are held weekly at 6:30 p.m. Mondays at the Manchester VA Medical Center, 718 Smyth Road, Floor 6, Room N650, and at 7 p.m. Thursdays at Southern New Hampshire Medical Center, West Campus.

More information about FA and its book, "Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous," is available at www.foodaddicts.org.

For local information, call Carol at 321-0199 or Kesaya 469-3101.