



## Boarding School Changing Lives of Severely Overweight Children

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By KNTV/NBC News Channel

Children are more overweight now than ever before. But while we often hear about the skyrocketing obesity rate, we don't hear a lot about kids who have lost the weight and kept it off. One school is changing the lives of every student it teaches.

Cold temperatures and a blanket of fog don't stop Lindsay Sauln from her morning run. Her commitment to exercise has helped her lose 70 pounds.

"When I first got here, I was a size 22."

The Palo Alto teenager arrived at the "Academy of the Sierras" last January.

"It's amazing. I can shop in regular stores now, not plus size stores, it's awesome."

The one-of-a-kind boarding school is blazing a new trail for helping obese children lose weight and keep it off.

"When students come here to the academy, many are not only struggling with their weight, but also with anger and depression. They leave however, with a much different mindset."



"They revive their spirit. It's one of the most exciting things to see, I feel fortunate to bear witness to something as beautiful as that."

Students attend traditional academic classes at the accredited school, along with nutrition, culinary, and fitness classes. And they work with a behavior therapist. Their diet is low-fat and smaller portions.

"I eat under 12-hundred calories a day and average a weight loss of five pounds a week."

Ryan Graelish of Richmond has lost 35 pounds, something that eluded him in the past.

"I finally just gave up, I figured, I was already big, so there was no point in trying."

Aimie Gabusi has had a life-long struggle with weight.

"I remember in pre-school, I was made fun of for being fat."

So far, she's taken off 60 pounds.

"I was at a point where I stopped looking at myself in the mirror, I stopped putting seatbelts on because of the embarrassment that they might not fit."

Getting to the root of why their weight got out of control can be difficult, but necessary.

"I experienced some trauma in the past, some abuse it's been difficult to work through some of the surrounding issues."

Wednesdays are nerve-racking. That's weigh-in day. Some are celebrating.

"It went really well, I'm really excited, I lost six pounds."

For Sauln, the news isn't as exciting.

"I maintained. It's not a bad thing, it just could have been better."

Losing is important but maintaining maybe more so.

"Scientifically, the results that we're seeing at the Academy of the Sierras are unprecedented in the entire scientific community. We're seeing students that are losing over 60-percent of their body weight and maintaining it six months later."

The road to a healthy weight is a long and tough one but certainly worth if you ask anyone here.

"Each week with those numbers going down, how does it feel?"

"Oh, it's like the greatest feeling ever."

"It's really exciting, I know I can do it."

Sauln will be back home month, ready for a fresh start and an appreciation for what she's accomplished.

"It's a really good place to be, I'm really glad I found this place."

One aspect of the program that can be tough for families: the cost.

Fees for the academy run about \$6,000 a month.

Some families do get assistance from their health insurance plans.

The school is looking into setting up scholarships.

For more information, visit [www.academyofthesierras.com](http://www.academyofthesierras.com).