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STUDENTS LOSE AT SCHOOL & GAIN CONTROL OF THEIR WEIGHT

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It's been called an epidemic. Being overweight has become the single biggest health threat facing our children. But one local teen has changed his life after losing nearly 100 pounds at the only boarding school for overweight and obese teens.

Alan Vick is a good-looking young man. The 15-year-old is spending the last lazy days of summer at H&M Landing in Point Loma, where his dad works. But even at his age, Alan has felt the cruel side of life - what it's like to be made fun of and laughed at.



"They see somebody who's fat or really big, they go wow, that's ridiculous, and make jokes about it," he said.

He's not comfortable remembering all the taunts.

"I was so overweight," he said.

Once, the Chula Vista teen weighed almost 300 pounds. But Alan had a life changing experience and lost 85 pounds. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't cheap.

His parents enrolled him in the Wellspring Academy in central California. It's the first boarding school for overweight children and teens.

"We're a therapeutic boarding school that specializes in treatment for kids with obesity and overweight,"

The school is for 12- to 18-year-olds who are 30 pounds or more overweight. They stay between six and nine months.

"At first I didn't want to go," Alan said.

But he was tired of feeling guilty about his weight.

Melear says this school isn't a fat camp.

"Our focus is a low-fat diet,"

Students eat less than 12 grams of fat a day, exercise and receive behavior modification. There are no diet pills or surgery at the academy. For this, parents pay more than \$6,000 a month.

"It's a really good program," Alan said. "I learned a lot about weight control, and health, nutrition, how to keep our weight off."Wellspring Executive Director David Melear said.

Alan has been home for three months, and his friends were shocked at the change.

"People didn't recognize me," he said.

But Alan recognizes the seriousness of being overweight.

"People see it as funny. I don't see how it's funny," he said.

He's right, because there are serious health risks.

"People don't realize they going to die at an early age if you keep continuing the way that you do," he said.

Alan says he's going to continue watching his weight, and hopes to inspire others.

"It's going to change your life, you're going to do things you never thought you could do...play sports have new friends," he said.

The tuition is more than \$6,000 a month - about the cost of a year at Harvard. But administrators say student loans and payment plans are available.