



# Indiana's 'Biggest Loser'

## Crozier Shares Wellness Council Past, Today's Lessons

**Marci Crozier, with her trainer Keith Johnson, works out at the Omni 41 Health & Fitness Connection facility that she manages in Schererville.**

**T**he electric sign outside of Omni 41 Health & Fitness Connection in Schererville depicts images of celebrity trainers Jillian Michaels and Bob Harper. Inside the facility just past the receptionist's desk sit two life-size cardboard photos, one carrying the image of Marci Crozier, 49, at 238 pounds, the second with her at a trimmer 162 pounds.

The Valparaiso native initially thought she was headed to California for the most recent season of NBC's "The Biggest Loser" to support her daughter, Courtney. At age 21, Courtney decided she needed to change her lifestyle and had lost 112 pounds even before joining the cast, when she weighed in at 323 pounds.

What Marci didn't realize was that she needed to be there to focus on her own weight and health issues. Despite serving as general manager of Omni 41, and as a 15-year board member of the Wellness Council of Indiana, she was unhealthy and stressed, a self-described "workaholic." Marci was eliminated from the show during week 11 after she hit her goal weight and lost 78 pounds. Courtney was eliminated in week 14, having lost 92 pounds total.

Marci sat down recently with BizVoice® to discuss her involvement with the Wellness Council of Indiana and how her life has changed since her experience on "The Biggest Loser."

**BizVoice®:** How did you get involved with the Wellness Council in the late 1980s?

**Marci Crozier:** "There were three founders: John Daviess, Len Sporman and Phil Huffine. Because of my affiliation with Omni and my friendship with them, they asked if (I) would be a part of that. That's what we're all about, just trying to help people live a healthier lifestyle. (The Council) evolved from many different things. It's always been a great resource for corporations to find their way through the wellness process."

**BV:** What was the impetus behind starting the Wellness Council?

**MC:** "Health care costs were – and are – astronomical. These guys were visionaries, and they recognized several years before it really hit hard that we need to figure out a way that we can help companies understand that by having moderately fit employees, you can lower your health care claims, you can lower your absenteeism and increase your productivity. You could just have a good culture, a good healthy culture in an organization."

**By Charlee Beasor**

**BV:** You own a Dairy Queen and are the general manager of a gym?

**MC:** “My husband and I own a Dairy Queen in Valparaiso. One of the things NBC producers asked me early on was, ‘You own a Dairy Queen and you run a health club? Something’s not right with that.’ I said, ‘I don’t know what you mean by that.’ Both industries that I’m in make people happy. It’s a shame to think that only overweight people walk into our Dairy Queen; that’s not true. Besides that, we don’t make people overweight. It’s the choices they make that make them overweight. When you eat, you need to eat the foods that you like and you shouldn’t deprive yourself. Everything in moderation is key.

“The other thing about Dairy Queen that people don’t realize is that it’s only 35 calories per ounce, made with 2% milk and it’s only 5% fat. We also have fat-free, sugar-free fudge bars and serve bananas and applesauce for the kids. Courtney, she’ll tell you this over and over: ‘I might make a bad choice, but my next choice just has to be a better one.’ ... It’s not only about people being overweight. That’s why the message I like to share is about wellness.

“On (‘The Biggest Loser’) ranch, they taught us about physical and mental health, why we emotionally ate. There was nothing there spiritual. That was for you (to figure out). If that was one thing I was able to rekindle for myself, it was my spiritual wellness. And that surrounds everything.”

**BV:** How has your involvement with the Wellness Council changed over the years?

**MC:** “I’ve been on the board of directors for 15 years. I wasn’t when it first came out; I was one of the grunt people. Ironically, I resigned from the board of directors just before I left (for ‘The Biggest Loser’). It was just because I didn’t feel like I was doing it justice. It wasn’t because of this, but I would say there were times during my tenure that I felt that I was a little bit

hypocritical. I wasn’t walking the talk and that bothered me sometimes, but now I know that God had a plan.

“Going through all that in my life helped me to be a better person. It helped me to be where I am today. It probably helped me to be on ‘The Biggest Loser’ with my daughter so we could pay it forward. ... When I came off the ranch, I thought, ‘I have this huge obligation,’ but it quickly turned into a privilege. I’m not obligated; it’s a privilege.”

**BV:** You spoke about feeling hypocritical. So many other people are also in that same position, knowing they need to change their lifestyles to be healthier. From your perspective, what is stopping them? What stopped you?

**MC:** “Life gets in the way. Courtney said it to me like this, ‘Mom, it’s going to take awhile to change our bodies and it’s taken awhile to change my body, but it takes a split second to change my mind. As soon as I change my mind, there is no looking back. The rest is history.’

“The biggest part of the equation is the motivation. It’s the powerful *why* of saying every day; this is *why* I’m doing it. That was easy for me once I had no distractions. But life gets in the way with all these distractions for us to think about our powerful *why* every day. The powerful *why* is the motivation. Why don’t people do it? They just get so distracted.

“Every day I felt like a hypocrite. Childhood obesity is a hot topic obviously and I work in a health club, and I’m looking at my computer (and) every day, something pops up about childhood obesity. Every day, I would go home and I would pound Courtney about, ‘Don’t eat that, and don’t do this.’ If I could take some of this back, I don’t know that I would. (Actually, I wouldn’t



Crozier participates in a challenge on “The Biggest Loser.” She and her daughter Courtney (left) enjoyed reading letters from home while in California.



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*- Marci Crozier*

because, Courtney says, ‘You set the foundation, but it’s still up to me to be ready.’ She was ready on her 21st birthday. She wasn’t ready when she was 14.

“One of the questions that people ask me all the time is, ‘What do you think is the single most important thing you learned on the ranch?’ They were going to do a sleep apnea test on me (on the ranch), (and) I said, ‘You don’t need to do that. I sleep like a baby.’ They did the test and told me that I slept in REM sleep for two hours a night, and that I had sleep apnea. I couldn’t believe it. They put me on the CPAP (a machine for sleep apnea), and I believe that was the single most important thing that happened to me.”

**BV:** You work in a gym. What about those employees who work in an office-type setting without easy access to a gym? What would you say to them about wellness?

**MC:** “Well, I always worked in a gym, so it wasn’t easy for me. It was probably harder for me. I didn’t want to be down here in the gym because people would want to talk to me about (work-related) complaints, or this member or that member and I never could have my peace. It wasn’t until I let people know that (distraction) was a problem for me. So I say, ‘Whatever it is, you have to speak up.’”

“It’s all about moving and different kinds of movement all the time. Walking is everything; you can walk your way to wellness. Everybody has one hour a day. If they don’t have one hour a day, they’re making excuses. I can guarantee you that. I had excuses, so I can talk about it. I would say, ‘Get rid of your excuses. Find an hour for yourself because you’re No. 1. If you don’t take care of No. 1, you can’t do the best at your job or help your family.’”

**BV:** How has wellness changed in Indiana since the founding of the Wellness Council?

**MC:** “I think it’s more serious now than it’s ever been. I think the visionaries saw, but the legislators didn’t, and I think the legislators are catching on that this is more than wanting people to be happy. It’s a social responsibility. It’s a financial

responsibility. Being well is being a good steward. When we’re taking care of ourselves, we’re taking care of some of the issues we have not only in Indiana, but in the country. Obviously, obesity is one of the biggest problems in the country. Here’s the thing about companies: It is definitely their social responsibility to take care of their employees and if they realized how much that helps them financially, they’re getting it.

“It’s also the self-responsibility of the employee to take care of themselves. I really get irritated when I hear employees say the companies need to do this for people. When it comes right down to it, nobody can do it for the individual. A company should have the ulterior motive of

helping their employees because it’s going to help them and their bottom line. But at the same time, we hope that’s not the only reason they do it. We hope they are thinking about the wellness and employees and families. (But) it really does boil down to self-responsibility.”

**BV:** What was it that inspired you to go on “The Biggest Loser?”

**MC:** “Courtney tried really hard to get on there. ... I would have jumped in front of a train for her to take care of her weight and her health. I went out there scared to death, thinking I was there for her. And when we were chosen, I still thought I was there for her until the day I walked onto the ranch. I let everything go and thought, ‘You know, Marci, you need to be here as much as she does. They wouldn’t have chosen you if you weren’t broken.’ And I was broken.”

**BV:** You actually hit your goal weight on the show?

**MC:** “I was the first person ever to hit my goal weight on the show. People were arguing that, saying 162 can’t be your goal weight, but I’m at 160 now and I’ve maintained that. I guarantee that’s the weight I’m supposed to be, that he (Dr. Robert Huizenga, ‘The Biggest Loser’ physician) said was right for me. It’s a very healthy weight. It feels good for me, on me. People say, ‘Oh you look good.’ I say, ‘I feel better than I look, trust me.’”

**BV:** What helped you be successful on the show and after?

**MC:** “I continue to live that lifestyle. I exercise every day, six days a week. I take a rest day; I think that’s very important. I do my cardio and my strength training. That’s made a huge difference for me. When I went back to the ranch for boot camp, I gained a pound and lost 2% of body fat. And so that was what Dr. H. was proud of. He said, ‘I love that.’”

“But I’ve been doing that and also kept my balance. I’m not going to allow myself to be stressed the way that I was and I find that through my spirituality. I’m not going to ever lose

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## Marci Crozier

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that again. I had that early in my life and somewhere along the way I lost it. I found it again and I'm not going to lose it again."

**BV:** What's in store for your future?

**MC:** "I believe this (attention) will last maybe six months, maybe a year. Then the next season comes. ... I feel like God planted me where he wants me. I would like to share the message with the industry to help understand deconditioned people and to know how to embrace them. People are intimidated to walk into (health) clubs, so I've made it my mission to be able to talk to fitness professionals, to help them understand how intimidated people are to walk into these doors. We need to campaign together. That's not a diabetic person that walked into the door (for example). It is a person with diabetes. That's the kind of thing that I know the future holds."

### INFORMATION LINK

**Resource:** Marci Crozier's 'Biggest Loser' page at [www.nbc.com/the-biggest-loser/contestants/marci](http://www.nbc.com/the-biggest-loser/contestants/marci)

**Crozier will be speaking at the September 27 Indiana Employee Health and Wellness Summit. Details at [www.indianachamber.com](http://www.indianachamber.com)**