

{LOCAL SUCCESS}

mike sanders

BY FRITZ ESKER

Mike Sanders has always been a big man. At Furman University, he played defensive tackle for the football team. He stood 6'3" and when he graduated from college, he weighed approximately 200 lbs. However, things changed after he graduated and ceased to play football. "When I began to live a more sedentary lifestyle behind a desk (around 1985), I started to gain about 10 lbs. a year," said Sanders.

Over the years, those pounds added up. In 2005, Sanders (now 51 years old) weighed 360 lbs. The weight gain was caused by a number of factors in addition to his sedentary lifestyle. Sanders ate unhealthy foods and was not getting proper nutrition. "Malnourished people can show it in many ways (they can either be very thin or very fat)," said Sanders.

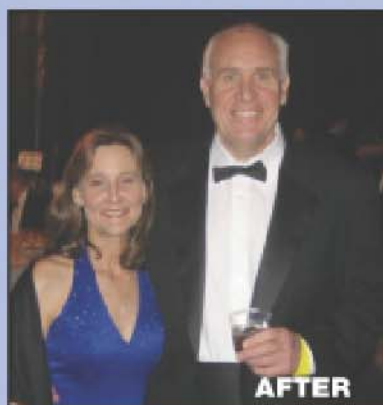


Sanders ate whatever was easy, namely a lot of fast foods. As a result of this terrible diet, he had to take blood pressure medication daily, as well as frequent doses of antacids to combat his chronic acid reflux problems. In addition to this, he regularly took painkillers. "My lifestyle was just terrible. I really didn't care what I looked like or felt like," said Sanders.

All of this was compounded by another

problem: Sanders' alcoholism. Sanders drank daily and he drank in high quantities, which exacerbated his weight issues. "Because of drinking, I'd skip breakfast, often lunch, and then eat like a pig at night," said Sanders. Things finally began to change for the better when Sanders' wife put an advertisement on his desk for a treatment center that treated the physical root of addiction. Here, Sanders learned that his cravings for food were tied to the same neurotransmitters that made him crave alcohol. "I had an immediate cessation of my need for drugs and alcohol."

The end of these cravings also gave Sanders a new clarity of mind that enabled him to make a plan as to how he would change his lifestyle. While he never ate breakfast when his addictions



were running wild, now he always eats breakfast. He's learned to love oatmeal, but he stresses that breakfast is incredibly important, even if you're not eating the most healthy foods available. "It's better to eat a doughnut than nothing at all," said Sanders.

For lunch, Sanders has grown fond of Subway sandwiches. He has dinner, but typically it's earlier at night (between six

and seven o'clock). If he has a snack after that, it's either carrots or a protein shake.

Daily exercise has become a critical part of Sanders' lifestyle as well. He believes it is important to work out every day, even that exercise is as simple as a 20-30 minute walk. Making it part of your routine is key. "If you do it all the time, not only does it become habit, it becomes fun," said Sanders.

Sanders emphasizes that above elements should be part of an overall lifestyle change. He said that he used to focus on numbers (like losing 10 pounds), but then he would ultimately regress. "People have to realize that to lose weight, a diet is not the answer." Making lifestyle changes and having fun doing it is important. "Find things that are healthy that you enjoy doing and do them."

Since he made a commitment to change, Sanders has whittled his weight down to 230 lbs (from 360). He still works as a stock broker, but has also taken time to start ExecuCare ARC (www.execucarearc.com), a group of outpatient addiction clinics, across the country. ExecuCare allows patients to get treatment without having to take off a month or more from work for inpatient care. The focus is on utilizing amino acids to restore neurotransmitters, which aids the recovery process.

And whether it's losing weight or fighting drug and alcohol addiction, Sanders always comes back to the notion of a lifestyle change. "It's not just about using drugs or alcohol...It's about quality of life, finding what things you can do everyday that make you enjoy daily life."