



# GOING STRONG

Downers Grove North teacher following through on goal of losing weight

Nader Najjar, a special education teacher at Downers Grove North High School, continues losing weight one year after joining a weight-loss program at Five Seasons Family Sports Club in Burr Ridge.

Photo provided

By **DAN FARNHAM**

dfarnham@shawmedia.com

**W**HILE many people have vowed to lose weight to start the new year, Nader Najjar is marking one year into his weight-loss efforts.

The 35-year-old Willowbrook resident and Downers Grove North High School teacher has lost 70 pounds the past year working with the staff at Five Seasons Family Sports Club in Burr Ridge.

In December 2014, Najjar won Five Seasons' "Be a Loser" contest that included a one-year family membership to the club, two one-hour training sessions per week, an activity tracker, nutrition counseling and a weekly goal-setting workshop.

He said he had been considering joining a fitness center to not only lose weight for his own health but also for the sake of his five children.

"I thought, 'This is ridiculous. I'm a poor example for my children,'" he said.

While Najjar said he was determined to lose weight regardless of whether or not he won the contest, he said the attention he got from winning and the expectations from the staff were among the reasons he was able to stick with the program.

See **GOAL**, page 4

## • GOAL

Continued from page 1

He added that people at the club would come up to him, saying they had heard about him winning the contest.

"It became like a healthy pressure where I kind of had to [stay with the program]," he said. "I was being put out there as a poster boy, so I had to do something."

The past year has been marked by a series of results and plateaus, according to Najjar.

In the first month, he was able to lose 15 pounds through basic exercise and changes to his diet. However, he soon realized that to continue losing weight he would have to up his efforts.

"I think that initial plateau is the most difficult one," he said. "I had to quickly adjust. I almost felt like, 'now this is really beginning.'"

He said some of his most dramatic results have come in the past eight weeks, when he increased his frequen-

cy of exercising.

Najjar started 2015 weighing 267 pounds, and by the time he weighed himself Dec. 22, he was down to 197. His goal is to get to 167 pounds, which he hopes to reach by mid 2016.

Besides the improvement to his health, he said losing weight has given him more confidence.

Najjar applied for and received a special education teacher job at Downers Grove North High School during the summer. He said he is not sure he would have had the confidence to apply for the job before he started losing weight.

"I just felt like whether I got the job or not, I put the best face forward," he said.

Najjar said his improved fitness has influenced his family to be more conscious of their own health, and he hopes to be able to use what he has learned to help others lose weight.

"My biggest goal is to be able to help someone else," he said. "I know how important this journey is for people."