

Pieces of the Past

By Susan Kalaher



The Quilt

This quilt remains to remind others of an experience shared by a group who came together to work on a common goal and who left behind a small piece of themselves.

The third week of class, I challenged the group to give up one article of clothing for every 20 pounds of weight they lost to symbolize giving up that size and not returning to it. I decided to use a circle shape to show that we are a part of each other. The background is new fabric to symbolize the new people, new shapes, we were becoming. The squares within the quilt were made from the fabric of the clothing I was given.

Each member of the group also helped to make for themselves a pillow using the same fabrics that make up the quilt.

Some of the thoughts members of the group expressed upon first seeing the quilt were: "We are all bound together through this quilt." "It makes me feel so proud." "I hope it can be put somewhere so it can be appreciated and can inspire others." "[When I see this quilt] I remember not to give up." "... because of the quilt, I didn't want to quit. I wanted my clothes to be part of the quilt." "The quilt is like little pieces of all of us. It is pieces of our past." ❖

Our experience over the past 20 years in Kaiser Permanente's Positive Choice Weight Program in San Diego, CA, has shown us that the underpinnings of obesity are varied, complex, and most often unconscious. The program lasts 20 weeks, during which participants are in an absolute fast—no food is eaten. The supplement, Optifast, is used to allow weight to be safely as well as rapidly lost. This is a time of great emotional stress because a favored coping device, eating, is given up. For some, the physical, emotional, or sexual protection afforded by obesity is also lost, worsening the stress. In one group, member Susan Kalaher decided to make a quilt, *Pieces of the Past*, to memorialize the efforts of those in her group.

— Vincent J Felitti, MD, Editor