



**Chiropractor Justin Scharer, demonstrating what a 5-pound block of fat would look and feel like, has helped more than 4,000 clients lose fat and regain control.**

The Business News Photo by Jerry Rhoden.

## Personal touch feeds Wausau Weight Loss

### Chiropractor's dual operation focuses on the spine, waist lines

**By Jerry Rhoden**

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It's the rare business owner who can serve his customers so well that he never sees them again, but if Dr. Justin Scharer does his job right and hits his goals with each of his patients and clients, he could be right on track.

Scharer, a third-generation chiropractor, runs a dual operation — Wausau Weight Loss and the Spinal Aid Centers of Wausau and Eau Claire. Scharer's practices are a bit non-traditional anyway, in that he focuses not on adjustments but on other non-surgical treatments such as spinal decompression.

Health care is deeply rooted in the Scharer family tree. His grandfather, Galen Scharer, founded a chiropractic practice in Owen in the late 1940s, and his father, Galen Scharer II, followed in the profession.

Justin Scharer's wife, Tina, is a registered nurse, his brother Nathan is a dentist in Wausau, Nathan's wife is a doctor in town, and Justin's brother, Brandon, is a foot surgeon in Green Bay.

So, while the Scharer family can treat a person from head to toe, it was in treating his clients' chiropractic needs that Justin Scharer began to realize a connection between musculoskeletal ailments and excess weight.

"A friend of mine was talking to me about helping people regain control of their metabolism," said Scharer, who opened his Wausau practice in April 2006 and the following February opened one in Eau Claire, where he also operates a weight-loss clinic.

"Most of the population is overweight, but if you lose weight, it puts less stress on your joints," he said. "The more you start losing weight, you reduce inflammation and you heal faster."

It's no secret that obesity is a health killer. Even being moderately overweight — 20-30 pounds

— can dramatically increase one's likelihood of developing high blood pressure, strokes, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and more.

The light went on, and Scharer began developing his program in consultation with chiropractic clients. He marks his fifth anniversary of Wausau Weight Loss, which he launched in January 2014 and has seen 4,000 clients participate.

"The most I've seen a man lose is 94 pounds," Scharer said of the 60-day program. "And for women, it was 71 pounds."

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Wausau Weight Loss and the Spinal Aid Centers

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He does some marketing but has maxed out what he has time to do — entice the curious to learn "the secret."

Scharer said the secret to weight loss — quality weight loss, not just starvation or sweating away water — can be as simple as resetting habits.

"I wanted my life back," said Terri Zastrow, a Wausau-area resident who completed the program right around Thanksgiving and lost 40 pounds.

"My weight had been up and down my whole life," she said. "My knees had a lot of pressure from

the weight. I'd get out of breath easy, and I'd just sit and watch TV."

Zastrow got up, turned off the TV, and began swimming regularly.

Scharer cited another who had to break a habit of eating ice cream every night.

"About 8 of every 10 people we follow up with have gone on to lose more weight," he said, adding that the human contact is largely what sets his business model apart from other nationally known weight-loss programs.

"Most people want accountability," said Scharer, who lost 20 pounds in test-piloting the program on himself. "They want results, and they can lose half a pound a day, so they see that."

Scharer doesn't recall a tremendous expenditure of finances going into the startup of what has become approximately half of his business.

What it required was a great investment of time.

"I did training at different seminars and researched with other doctors in the country," he said. "I think that my experience with the Spinal Aid clinics really helped me to add the weight loss part and make it fit what we were looking to accomplish as another way to help people regain their health and do it in a way that they can maintain it long term."

Scharer has a staff of four full-timers in Wausau and three full in Eau Claire.

It's the staff that helps him not only get new clients into the system but follow up afterward to make sure they're staying on track.

"Email is just not the same as a face-to-face meeting where we can sit down and say, 'Let's figure this out,'" he said.