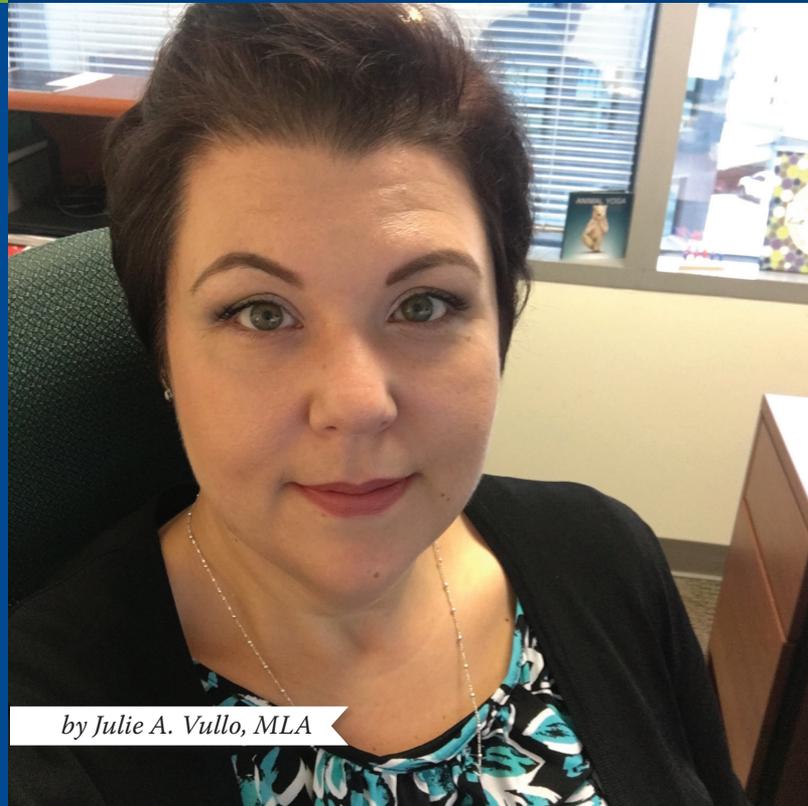


Education Matters
Advocacy Matters
Support Matters

OAC MEMBERS
MATTER

It's Never
Too Late to
CHOOSE
BETTER
HEALTH



by Julie A. Vullo, MLA

“ I know all too well the effects of being the largest person in the room. As someone who is native to New Orleans, in a city full of average-sized people, I literally couldn't find a place to fit in. ”

I know all too well the effects of being the largest person in the room. As someone who is native to New Orleans, in a city full of average-sized people, I literally couldn't find a place to fit in.

The loneliness, the physical and emotional pain and the social discrimination that plagued my body for most of my life seemed to be burdens I'd grown used to living with.

At 5'5 and nearly 400 pounds, I exceeded the expectations for what any woman with severe obesity should've physically been able to do. I did 5k bridge races, kayaking, trail mud runs and sport motorcycle riding – and these activities were a way of life for me until it all came to a screeching halt during a routine annual wellness exam in late 2015.

I walked in thinking it would be a quick visit as usual, but it was far from it. Instead, I was diagnosed with non-alcoholic fatty-liver disease (NAFLD) and several other serious obesity-related diseases. I knew immediately I had to make a decision. Would I head toward a liver transplant, or have bariatric surgery to reduce the amount of fat surrounding my liver?

Here are a few tips that my journey has taught me to help me achieve my goals. I know you've heard them before, but have you given them the best you've got?

- **Be Kind to Yourself** – You will have to love and fuel your body to carry you through your journey to better health.
- **Water: Drink Lots of it** – When you think you might float away from drinking so much, drink more! I aim for at least a gallon a day.
- **Fill-up on Protein** – I notice that more protein intake helps to curb my hunger. I still supplement one meal a day with a protein shake.
- **Limit “Bad” Carbs** – Trade bread and chips for more leafy greens. I found this to be the solution that helped satisfy my cravings and cut calories.
- **Get Lots of Rest** – Life is hard sometimes, but big changes are even harder on you. Recharging your body is as important as refueling your body, and there's no substitute for it.
- **Get Moving** – Even if it means shifting sides in your chair or getting up to grab the remote, get moving. Simply walking is still my favorite exercise!

- **Listen to Hunger Cues** – Everyone's cues can be different. For some, it's a yawn or a sneeze. For me, it's a small sigh that tells me I'm nearly full. I've learned to stop there before overeating.
- **Gadgets Help** – My favorites are the insta-pot and air fryer. They really speed up food prep and cook times.

Remember, the journey to improved health can be overwhelming to begin, so start with one good decision a day and set small, attainable goals. Rest assured that it's okay to experience many emotions, no matter what point you may be at on your journey. Moving out of the darkness and into a lifestyle filled with many more opportunities is great motivation in my personal fight against obesity. I wholeheartedly support the OAC's initiative to improve the lives of individuals such as myself and all of those affected by the disease of obesity. It is comforting to know that we are never fighting obesity alone.

About the Author:

Julie Vullo, MLA, is an active OAC member who recently graduated from Tulane University. She volunteers as a member of our Convention street team, and would like to use her experiences to help others on their journey with weight and health.

Smart Patients

Weight Management Forum
in partnership with the OAC

We're having an honest conversation about weight and health.
Join OAC members and supporters in our online forum:
smartpatients.com/oac





ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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