**WELCOME SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SHERRY FRANK**

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here! Both Gary and I appreciate the effort each one of you made, and the time you’ve taken to explore a little... take a virtual tour through an adventure to which I believe we can all relate... it’s about resistance.... refusal... surrender... and ultimately begs the most contemporary question I can think of... “If there’s food on a plate, and I **DIDN’T** take a picture of it, did I **REALLY** eat it??? (**Wait for the laugh**)... Trust me... I ate it... I weighed it... We scrutinized... and together, we documented.

The other day, I read a quote from the painter, Claude Monet. “To see, we must forget the name of the thing we are looking at.” What hangs on these walls, to the uninitiated, might seem like a superficial collection of carefully placed eggs and fruit and greens... **LOTS** of greens.... **LOTS** of coffee **TONS** of water... but if we try to suspend our preconceived notions and labels, what this is... what anything is that we do, is pure self expression. I began to realize... everything we do allows us to reveal who we are, and as I found myself on this path... as I began to unfold... as I allowed myself to be more open to the support and encouragement of others, the more I wanted to share my story.... the more I wanted to honor the journey.

Believe me... this project didn’t have a very auspicious beginning... let’s start from... I felt like **CRAP** (**can you say that?**)... I was gaining weight, I pretty sure I looked terrible, my self esteem was **plummeting**...and I know that most of you that **REALLY** know me would find it almost **IMPOSSIBLE** to believe... but at times I **DO** whine... and complain... and beat myself up.... but through all of that, I noticed something... my friend Esther looked **FABULOUS**... (**Do you want Esther to wave?**)... Even in my funk, I was able to maintain a healthy curiosity.... I couldn’t resist asking her what her secret was... it was no secret... she was on a diet/fitness regimen with someone named Gary McConnell... Of course, my considerations in my head still whined louder than the positive comments I was thinking regarding Esther’s transformation.... but my “**dark side**” was still winning... Gym... **TOO FAR AWAY**!!! Gary.... **WHO THE HECK IS GARY**??? Watch my eating??? **DIETS DON’T WORK**!!! In the middle of my protests at lunch one day, Esther deftly... and swiftly... added me to a text chain with Gary... there **ARE NO** **ACCIDENTS**... There was **NO** turning back...

And so it began... the roller coaster left the station and Gary and I began our course of accountability, collaboration, and self expression. I had no intention of joining a gym or watching what I was eating, but encouragement and human connection go a long way. As I let down my guard and in turn experienced the humanity of the people around me, in this case, Gary, I began to experience a shift... I surrendered... As I opened my mind and closed my mouth... eh.. not **REALLY**... (**Wait for the laugh**), I began to really appreciate the whole process... the gym sessions and encouraging texts were enhanced by my mandate... I had to text images to Gary of everything I ate. I found

that as I progressed, I became more encouraged... more responsive... more alive... and I wanted to honor the steps and the results.... and as much as the actual surrender and workouts and texts and food images are a form of self expression, so is the **SHARING** of the experience. Now, each one of you that views this work becomes part of the project as well. Art provokes thought... I invite you to pay attention to your reactions and your own thought process.... As Monet said, we tend to place labels on things... that gets in the way of us seeing what is actually in front of us.

Self expression begets self expression... as Gary and I continued to work together, we both realized a true friendship was forming. It went beyond drill searge....I mean **MENTOR** (**Wait for the laugh**) and student. We became collaborators. I learned so much... especially that it doesn’t pay to be passive when it comes to living a fulfilled, meaningful life. I complained... Esther took action. I resisted...Gary wouldn’t tolerate that... in the kindest, most supportive, encouraging ways. **WE** are the captains of our own ships. We get one life... we can chose to live it in the shadows, or we can dare to express... to be bold... to go for a goal... to allow ourselves to be scrutinized... and to know, no matter what, that how we choose to live is completely our choice.

So here I am... with the love of my family (**Do you want to acknowledge your husband and kids?**)... the encouragement of my friends, the tenacity of Esther, and of course, the partnership of Gary. I want you all to know that this is not really about weight loss and fitness... although that played a crucial part in this process... this is about the **HUMANITY** of commitment... the dedication to our spirit, and the joy of being connected... Thank you all again.... Let’s look!!