



■ Marie Griffiths, of School Terrace, Blaengarw. Marie set up her own slimming classes called Slimtone in 1982 and now runs 20 classes. She was the first slimming club to go online and now has members all over the world PICTURE: Peter Bolter ©

# The slimming club that has grown around globe

Rachel Mainwaring

rachel.mainwaring@walesonline.co.uk

MARIE Griffiths will never tire of hearing successful slimming stories. More than 30 years after she set up her first slimming class, with just a handful of members, she has members from all over the world. And nothing gives her greater satisfaction than knowing her dream – to run her own slimming business – has helped others in the battle of the bulge.

Marie, who lives in Blaengarw, left a comfortable job to set up on her own and through sheer hard work and determination has seen her Slimtone business grow and grow while her members have, effectively, shrunk!

"I used to be an office manager for a well-known construction company and loved all the perks that came with the job, especially the biscuits, the staff restaurants and the leftovers from the business lunches.

advertising in the press, all from my spare bedroom.

"I started with one class in Pontycymmer and went from there. I now have 20 classes through Bridgend, the Rhondda and Porthcawl but it's the online community that is very exciting as I have people all over the world following the eating plan.

"As I got the business up and running, news travelled by word of mouth and more and more people started coming to the classes. One became two, then three and four and it took five years for me to expand the business.

"Then I took on a full-time admin manager who specialises in IT. I have 10 lecturers who help me run the classes – and still take six

myself – and was able to buy a small flat to convert to a new office."

After the successful launch of her internet mail order services in 1998, she went on to introduce an online slimming club and health and fitness portal in August 2000 and has united slimmers from all over the world.

"It's great because one of my first online members was from Germany, who joined after originally coming to my classes but then she had to move away with her husband.

"One of my very first online members lost 10st and has managed to keep the weight off after all these years.

"It's lovely to think that Carol from Seattle could be talking to Trudi in Brisbane about lost inches or Farina in Egypt could be congratulating Sharon in Chester for a few lost pounds. It makes me very proud to think that it's open to anyone, anywhere in the world."

Marie, who has a son Alun, found launching on the internet quite an isolating experience as she didn't have many resources to call on for help.

But says she had a very understanding bank manager who let her use him as a sounding board.

"Having an understanding family really helped too, like when you have to suddenly jot down an idea in the middle of the night, which might not go down so well with some partners! After all these years, I still get a real buzz from what I do.

"It's so rewarding to see someone come to a class and there are so many success stories online that I hope they inspire other people to turn to my healthy eating plans.

"The key with weight loss is to keep it off and most of my clients still come back once they've reached their target weight, just to keep up with fresh ideas.

"But for those who can't come to classes, the website offers slimming and eating secrets and a shopping mall where members can buy everything needed for health and fitness.

"When I look back it's, quite unbelievable to think I did it but I'm very proud."

■ Visit the Slimtone website: [www.slimtone.co.uk](http://www.slimtone.co.uk)