

OUR TOWNS Hartington

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They're Losing It In Hartington!

Residents Drop Weight To Support Relay For Life

BY LORETTA SORENSEN
P&D Correspondent

HARTINGTON, Neb. — Some Hartington residents are "losing big" thanks to the efforts of Avera Sacred Heart Medical Clinic staff members Tonya Jochimsen and Crystal Eickhoff.

Jochimsen, a nurse practitioner, and Eickhoff, a clinic nurse, organized a weight loss program dubbed "Biggest Loser" to raise funds for Hartington's upcoming Relay for Life. The 12-week project began Jan. 13 and will run through April 7.

"We did it just in the clinic last year and it really worked well," Eickhoff said. "There's no other organized weight loss program in town, so this year we thought we'd open it up to the community. People have really enjoyed taking part in it. A couple of the participants are diabetics and they were just as interested in improving their control of the disease as losing weight."

Biggest Loser participants paid a fee to be part of the program. A total of 54 men and women ranging in age from high school to 70-years-plus enrolled. Group members come to the clinic each Wednesday evening and weight loss is recorded in their private file. The individual losing

the largest percentage of their body weight at the end of 12 weeks will receive a cash prize. The remaining proceeds will be donated to Relay For Life.

"Obesity is a national problem," Jochimsen said. "We thought this would be a good way to help community residents improve their health. While they're learning more about nutrition, we're all helping support Relay for Life."

Handouts provided by the clinic have been organized around the needs and concerns expressed by the group. Jochimsen said the focus of the program from the outset has been to assist participants in successfully modifying their lifestyle in order to maintain the weight loss they're achieving.

Lifestyle changes are much more successful than fad diets," Jochimsen said. "We've been teaching the group about nutrition and fitness, how to read labels and plan meals. We've also stressed the importance of them knowing what their blood pressure and cholesterol numbers are and the benefits of completing health screenings."

To get the group off to a good start, Jochimsen and Eickhoff calculated each participant's Body Mass Index to determine their

height to weight ratio. Each participant was then given a goal of shedding 10 percent of his or her weight during the 12-week period.

"We selected the 10 percent goal because research has demonstrated that losing just 10 percent of your body weight significantly decreases your risk for heart disease, diabetes and some other chronic illnesses," Jochimsen said. "Sometimes people start a weight loss program with a goal of losing 50 pounds. That's an ambitious goal and it might be hard to stay with a weight loss plan to reach that. We all have a better chance of succeeding at weight loss goals if we set smaller goals to begin with."

Knowledge of the contents of canned foods and awareness of portion sizes are two of the main weight loss goal ingredients that can lead to success.

"Lack of knowledge is one of the biggest challenges people face when they're trying to lose weight," Jochimsen said. "Portion control is very important. When people realize they can have a piece of cake if they just have a small piece, that helps them maintain an eating plan. A portion of meat is three or four ounces. A dish of cereal is just a few ounces. Often people will consume two or three portions of a



PHOTO: LORETTA SORENSEN
Nurse Practitioner Tonya Jochimsen (left) and Clinic Nurse Crystal Eickhoff have recorded a 405-pound weight loss for Hartington residents participating in the Biggest Loser fundraising project Jochimsen and Eickhoff organized in January.

food and not realize what they've done."

Jochimsen and Eickhoff have also stressed the importance of eating a balanced diet and not eliminating any one food group. "Sometimes people think they can just eat vegetables or fruit and lose weight," she said. "But they'll never stick to that eating plan."

Planning ahead is also important for successfully following an eating plan.

"Know what foods you have on hand and what you're going to eat each day," Eickhoff said. "Select the proper foods and have enough for the right portions."

Weight loss on a balanced diet can average as much as two pounds per week. Some dieters will see weight loss of up to four pounds each week at the beginning of their programs.

A few of the Biggest Loser participants saw losses of as much as 11 pounds during their first week. At their most recent meeting, the Biggest Loser participants had collectively shed 405 pounds. Although some of the participants haven't faithfully stopped in for weekly weigh-ins, the majority of participants are meeting their goals.

"A few of them have nearly met their weight loss goals for 20 pounds already and we're only half way through the program," Eickhoff said. "Most of them have told us they needed this kind of weekly accountability in order to stay focused on their goals. When they get together they encourage one another and get a boost knowing they're not alone in trying to improve their health. There's a lot of good social interaction and that's been good for

the community." Since they're only halfway through the Biggest Loser program, Jochimsen and Eickhoff say it's hard to verify that they'll organize the project again next year. Given the success they've already achieved, they're optimistic that both they and the Hartington community will be ready to take up the weight loss challenge again next year.

"We'll probably do it again," Jochimsen said. "Participants are sharing their success stories with the community and letting people know how much they're enjoying the program. There will probably be other residents next year that will be ready to take part in it."

Cedar County Relay for Life will be held June 5, with opening ceremonies at p.m. at the Hartington Sports Complex.

SCHOOL

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Knudson's and Brunner's versions of the funding bill would give schools no increase next year.

Knudson argued that his bill would not bust the budget because increases in school aid could not exceed the overall growth in state general revenue.

Lobbyists for groups representing school boards and teachers testified in favor of Knudson's original proposal, with most saying they can survive with no funding increase this year if they know they will get more money when the economy improves.

Schools have been cutting programs and teachers in recent years to deal with budget problems, said Sandy Arseneault, president of the South Dakota Education Association, the state's main teachers union.

"All of these things that are good for kids have been going away slowly," Arseneault said.

SEUSS

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enthusiasm. We are starting to send home book packs, so the kindergartners themselves are starting to read. It is exciting to get that little boost from somebody other than me."

Because Dr. Seuss was such a prolific writer, with more than 200 books to his credit, Barger said that she is often able to incorporate his books in to her themes.

"I think that Dr. Seuss is just such a great choice for kids to read," Spech said. "He has written so many books that there is a book for every situation. Seeing their responses to the questions we asked was a lot of fun, too."

The Mount Marty students, who are visiting the schools on their own time, also created a small certificate and sticker to send home with the children, so that the kindergartners could share what they learned and hopefully help develop into life long readers.

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