

Michiganders shed 15,000 pounds

In conjunction with Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's goal to "build a system that encourages all of us to have an annual physical, reduce obesity and encourage an active and healthier lifestyle in our state," now the tenth fattest in the nation, thousands of Michiganders have done their part to trim the state's waistlines. This as HealthyWage, an online network that pays members who improve their health, recently announced the winners of "The Michigan Matchup" — a statewide, three-month long weight-loss contest that recently awarded top-performing individual and corporate teams with a total of \$18,000 in cash prizes.

The first, second and third place teams of 5 each lost more than 200 collective pounds, with the thousands of competition participants losing more than 15,000 pounds collectively. The Grand Traverse Band of Indians won the Company vs. Company division with a collective weight loss of 900 pounds (7 percent of their combined starting body weight), also securing the substantial cash prize and bragging rights.

More than 95 percent of The Michigan Matchup's contestants successfully lost weight, shedding an average of 7 pounds. Participants cited the contest's accountability, spirit of competition, and huge cash prizes as major motivators, all validating HealthyWage's founding premise that a financial incentive is one of the most effective methods for motivating health-seekers to make positive diet, fitness and lifestyle changes.

"With 29.4% of adults and

12% of children in Michigan considered obese, and with obesity-related health care costs in Michigan pushing \$3 billion a year, this initiative is a positive and desperately needed step in the right direction," said HealthyWage cofounder David Roddenberry. "The Michigan Matchup leveraged our social network model proven to help motivate and sustain weight-loss. While our company pays all Michigan residents \$100 to lose weight as a standard part of our year-long program, we've found that the free \$100 cash incentive is more effective at motivating weight loss when coupled with a matchup or other kind of contest to build excitement and peer support in working toward weight-loss goals."

The top three winning teams for 2011 are as follows:

\$10,000 first prize: "You've Lost that Love Handle Feelin'"

The winning group of 5 male co-workers employed a strong team strategy, committing to keeping their team accountable and to lay off the donuts at work!

"As a guy, sometimes saying 'I am on a diet' feels a little weird, but in our team of five guys, it just seems normal. We all helped each other with positive reinforcement whenever possible, as well as good natured ribbing when someone might be slipping a little," said team member James Zengel.

\$5,000 second prize: "PHAT5"

These long-time friends and co-workers credited staying positive and walking together regularly as helping them lose

weight.

"Everyone was very encouraging, very understanding, and shared healthful eating information," said contestant Jesse Ward. "Walking together made the weight loss more fun and achievable."

\$3,000 third prize: "Weapons of Mass Reduction"

This group of co-workers from the Community Mental Health Authority found out about the contest through a news article. One of the team members, Jana Weeks, has lost over 80 pounds as she sheds weight for her upcoming wedding. The financial prize was an additional motivator to allow her to have her dream wedding.

Weeks explains, "The thought of winning the money [for the wedding] and letting my teammates down was constantly on my mind. Not to mention the 'unofficial' weigh-in weekly. my teammates held me accountable each week."

All participants in the Michigan Matchup are eligible for a \$100 cash prize from HealthyWage if they achieve a healthy weight (BMI below 25) by January 2012. Matchup contests aside, all year long HealthyWage offers cash rewards-based diet programs that pay participants to make healthy choices. The company's BMI Challenge pays up to \$1,000 to users who move from an obese BMI (greater than 30) to a normal BMI (less than 25) over a year's time, while following a few rules and checking in on a weekly basis.

Additional program information is available online at www.healthywage.com/cash-rewards.



