

Scaled down

Team loses 115 pounds, gains \$10,000

AKSHAYA Misra was tired of feeling fat. So were her colleagues at work.

So Misra, with Continuum Health Partners, and some colleagues, formed a team of five to shed those hard-to-lose pounds with an eye to winning the \$10,000 grand prize in the HealthyWage NYC Matchup.

Misra's team lost 115 pounds in all, or 12.5 percent total body weight — and they walked away \$10,000 richer.

"Losing weight is very expensive," laughs Misra. "As you lose more, you have to invest more money in your wardrobe." And invest she will with her \$2,000 share of the pot.

Misra dropped two sizes, down to a size 2, with a 12-pound weight loss. Over the last two years, she has shed 40 pounds. Losing weight with HealthWage helped her drop those final pounds.

"What really helped is that you are part of a team," says Misra, a resident of Jersey City. "Go hard or go home' is our motto and everyone is invested, everyone wants to win. You have accountability, and if someone slacks, it brings the entire team down."

The contest, which was open to all, ran for 12 weeks and ended in September. Some 1,000 participants — each in a team of five — lost a total of 6,300 pounds, according to David Roddenberry, founder of New York City-based HealthyWage.

Roddenberry just rolled out a new contest called the 10 percent challenge: join for \$100, lose 10 percent of your body weight, and earn \$200. "People like the allusion to gambling," says Roddenberry. Go to healthywage.com to sign up.

As far as Roddenberry knows, HealthyWage is the only weight-loss organization in the country to put up money for participants to lose weight.

In its two-year existence, HealthyWage has given out \$421,000 and over 850,000 pounds have been shed via team and individual contests in all 50 states.

Sharon Roopnarine of Corona, Queens, is another winner of the NYC Matchup. She dropped 34 pounds, lost 19 percent of her body weight, and earned a share of her five-member team's

\$5,000 prize.

"I've been trying to lose weight for years and I've tried different things," she says. "The competition and being on the team helped."

Roopnarine, a finance analyst with Healthfirst, and four colleagues lost 134 pounds in all, an 11.7-percent drop in body weight. She was the team leader. "If you believe, you can achieve something," she says.

Misra's winning technique? She joined a boot camp and ate 100 to 150 calories every hour-and-a-half for a total of 1,200 calories a day. "That way I was full the whole day," Misra says. "I didn't put my body through starvation."

As for Roopnarine, she did a complete overhaul. "I went from eating whatever to eating soups and salads," she says. The final month, hitting a plateau, Roopnarine lowered her caloric intake and worked out at the gym almost every day. Says Roopnarine: "I got serious the last month!"

— Diane Herbst

