



Now in Salt Lake file photo

Men and women around the nation are using websites to help them reach their weight-loss goals and get their gamble on.

High Five

Utah Hot Spots

Temple Square // Mormon or not, not visiting Temple Square in the heart of Salt Lake City would be like going to Rome and not seeing the Vatican.

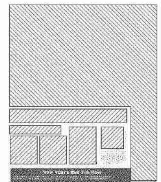
University of Utah District // Hogle Zoo, Red Butte Garden, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Utah Museum of Natural History and more.

Park City // This old mining town and home to the Sundance Film Festival ranks among the top Utah tourist destinations.

Heber Valley // The historic railroad, hot springs, resorts, the Provo River and Deer Creek and Jordanelle Reservoirs offer something for everyone.

Downtown Ogden // Visit the Salomon Center, Historic 25th Street, great ethnic restaurants, clubs and more.

compiled by
Tom Wharten



Weight-Loss Wagers

Websites help men and women alike lose weight and win bets.

LEANNE ITALIE

The Associated Press

In New York, Neil Ylanan eats for a living and travels constantly as a food expert for a company that supplies in-flight meals to airlines. Toss in those sleepless, sluggish early years of fatherhood — he's got three young kids — and he was dealing with significant weight gain.

Looking around his office in Irving, Texas, the 37-year-old Ylanan realized he wasn't alone, so he rallied four of his fellow foodies at LSG Sky Chefs for a weight-loss competition online.

They named their team "All About the Benjamins," in homage to the \$10,000 top prize offered by Healthywage.com, one of at least a dozen diet betting sites to emerge after "The Biggest Loser" went on the air and the nation's obesity epidemic grew worse.

Each of the Benjamins anted up \$60 to lose more — up to a safe weekly maximum — than 30 or so teams from the same company and around the map. They had three months. Victory was theirs in October.

"At first we really were all about the Benjamins, but the

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impetus kind of changed. You didn't want to let your teammates down," said Ylanan, who at 5-foot-7 began the competition at 245 pounds and ended it at 196.

"I joined a gym. We've all picked up racquetball," he said.

"I haven't played racquetball in 15 years."

Research on whether financial incentives lead to weight loss is inconclusive, but that hasn't kept thousands of people off diet betting sites since they began sprouting in 2004. Many of the sites experience dramatic hikes in traffic during the danger stretch between Thanksgiving and January.

"We think of New Year's as our Black Friday," said Victoria Fener, director of operations for Stickk.com.

Each site has its own rules and tools, like line graphs to track progress, regular emails with tips and support, and rankings to keep an eye on the competition. Stickk allows users to set their own stakes, including an "anti-charity" donation to a hated cause. The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Americans United for Life are top recipients.

Most of the sites are free or require a small fee. Many make money betting optional to tackle weight loss and other health goals.

Regular weigh-ins are usually required, either through the honor system or a third-party source like a doctor or a health club. Privacy settings keep sensitive details hidden if desired, but Facebook-esque walls provide that sought-after share factor popular with players.

At Weightlosswars, where the motto is "Lose together or gain alone," marketing director Pete Maughan expects 10,000 to 15,000 people to

register from mid-December through January. The site already has nearly 130,000 users in private team weight-loss competitions among friends, families and co-workers, along with individuals competing in public challenges like Seth Brown.

"We're kind of like an annual flower," Maughan said. "I don't view it as a solution to America's weight-loss problem, but it's an important spark and a fun and extremely motivational way to get started on a weight loss journey."

Klark Overmyer in Snellville, Ga., lost 58 pounds as part of a five-person team backed by his company, Rooms to Go. They lost a collective 252 pounds in three months and — like Ylanan's Benjamins — evenly split one of the \$10,000 Healthywage jackpots.

"I would like to say that I'm above the money being a big motivator but who am I kidding," said Overmyer. "Without the money, my vacation to Disney wouldn't be a possibility. Instead of seeing Mickey, my son would be seeing his fat dad on the sofa."

You Should Go Wagering Weight-loss Sites

// weightlosswars.com

// healthywage.com



Create Weight Loss Competitions & Weight Loss Challenges. Join a Team or Individual Online Weight Loss Program!

WeightLossWars is a fun weight loss motivation website where weight loss success stories are made! Our weight loss tools are free, fully customizable for your healthy life, including the best local or national weight loss challenge program. Lose together or gain alone!™

Sign Up! (It's FREE)

- ✓ **Get Fired Up Competing to Lose Weight.** Let competition push your weight loss to a new level. Start a weight loss or exercise competition with your friends and family, or join a public competition. Find out how much fun losing weight can be, with the weight loss programs we offer.
- ✓ **Get Support & Weight Loss Motivation.** Share, learn, and motivate each other through our social network of health-minded people. Select friends who will become your goal motivators and whom will receive a weekly update on your progress. Through our network you will discover the power of numbers!
- ✓ **Get Real Time Stats on Yourself and Your Opponents.** You will love our free weight loss tracking tools where you can record anything from your weight, calories, or exercise minutes. Celebrate your progress as you view personalized graphs of your new lifestyle, and track your triumphs and struggles using adventure journals. Plus, when you create a competition, you can also compare yourself to your opponents with weight loss graphs & leader boards!



AP Photo

A screen shot image shows Weightlosswars.com.