

POH employees lose 914 pounds total in weight-loss challenge

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 Of The Oakland Press

The 150 employees at POH Medical Center who took part in the Michigan Match obesity fighting program lost a whopping total of 914 pounds.

More than 15,000 pounds were lost state-wide during the three-month weight-loss contest. Average weight loss of those who signed up was 7 pounds, but some lost more than 50 pounds. Winning teams won \$10,000, \$5,000 and \$3,000, for first-, second- and third-place prizes.

The Clarkston Chubs at Clarkston Medical Center came out as the top team at POH, which had the most employees to compete. The Chubs lost 9.88 percent of their total weight pounds, said Laurie Ferris, exercise physiologist, who developed the program.

Kathy Kowalski was top weight loser at POH, taking off more than 15 percent of her starting body weight.

Many teams from Oakland County "lost a lot of weight, with some individuals losing more than 50 pounds," said Karen Hayhurst, spokeswoman for the event. But none of the teams from POH or around Oakland County were top winners, said Hayhurst on behalf of Healthy-Wage that sponsored the contest in answer to Gov. Rick Snyder's

call to children and adults to reduce weight.

"We had the most participants among all the companies that participated," Ferris said.

Even individuals and teams that didn't win the state contest stand a chance to win \$100, Hayhurst said.

All they have to do is lose enough weight to reach their desired BMI (Body Mass Index) of below 25 by January 2012. The BMI is an estimate of body fat based on height and weight. It can tell a person if they are carrying too much, too little or just the right amount of fat.

"The majority are participating in the BMI Challenge," Ferris said. "If they keep off this weight or lose more, they get an extra \$100. They still have to do weekly weigh-ins," she said. POH is also giving prizes to its winning employees.

"The group exercise classes are really helping," Ferris said. "Quite a few teams get together and come to exercise classes as a group. The team from the ER is going as far as meeting with physicians to see how their cholesterol is. They want to see how the program is impacting their health."

To help employees do well in the Michigan Match contest, POH expanded its ongoing "Fit for Life" program that is operated by Michele Hosang. In addition, as part of the effort to fight obesity, POH hosted its first Fit for Life 5K Fun Run & Walk on June 11

at Beaudette Park, said Kaniqua Daniel, spokeswoman for POH.

Pat Himmelspach, who works in the OR, was an organizer for the Michigan Match, with Ferris.

They said the 150 people who signed up were divided into 30 five-member teams. Goals were established for the teams and POH offered exercise programs three or four times a day, when the fitness center for cardiac rehabilitation was not being used for patients. Separate exercise areas also were set up in other parts of the hospital.

Weekly emails were sent out to keep people motivated, more classes were offered, email questions were answered by organizers and weekly weigh-ins were done.

The Fit for Life program that was created in 2008, is an ongoing employee wellness program. It had already made meal changes in the cafeteria. It offered take-out lunches so people would have time to exercise on their lunch hours. And free exercise sessions, such as yoga and pilates, were provided. Employees also did weight tracking at healthyweight.com.

FYI

Readers can calculate their own Body Mass Index by visiting the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website at www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/.



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