



MENDOCINO COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Human Resources Department 234-6600

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Mendocino County and Local Hospital Employees Join Together to Lose Over a Ton!

Approximately twelve weeks ago, a total of 613 County of Mendocino, Ukiah Valley Medical Center (UVMC), Frank Howard Memorial Hospital (HMH) and Mendocino Coast District Hospital (MCDH) employees and their families embarked on a worksite challenge to become the Biggest Losers – of weight that is. A total of 84 teams shed a combined total of 2,450 pounds through exercise and healthy eating during the three month challenge.

The County of Mendocino's Employee Wellness Program created and facilitated a worksite Biggest Loser Challenge, loosely based on the popular reality TV show with the goal of educating Mendocino County employee participants about lifestyle changes that help with weight loss and ultimately improve overall health. The County of Mendocino partnered with the local hospitals to expand the program to hospital employees, as well as provide increased hands on educational opportunities. Employees participated on teams consisting of no more than six people as they endeavored to become the team with the greatest percent weight loss. Individuals also participated either to lose weight or just to improve their nutrition and physical activity habits by completing 12 weekly mini-challenges. Each organization tailored the Challenge for their employees and offered a variety of prizes to keep participants engaged and motivated throughout the three months.

In all, the County of Mendocino had 39 teams with a total of 300 participants join the County's Biggest Loser Challenge competing for recognition and prizes donated from local businesses. Participants who turned in a log sheet each week were entered into a weekly raffle drawing and team prizes were awarded to the top three teams with the greatest percent weight loss. *"The overwhelming support the County received from the community helped make this program a success. It's clear that in a nation struggling with the obesity epidemic, Mendocino County is one community that supports proactively doing something about it,"* stated Mendocino County CEO Carmel J. Angelo. Testimonials from Biggest Loser participants include individuals with drastically lowered cholesterol, inspiring stories of individuals making weight loss a family affair as well as countless other personal stories of individuals who have replaced unhealthy habits with healthy lifestyle changes.

Ukiah Valley Medical Center had a total of 34 teams participate in the Challenge. According to Director of Nutritional Services and UVMC Challenge organizer, Kathleen Cervantes, *"We were excited to be a part of this County wide challenge. There was a lot of excitement around this and the employee participation was phenomenal! We had 177 employees participate in the team*

challenge and 37 employees in the individual challenge. We're working to help our employees sustain the healthy habits they've introduced into their lifestyles and we can't wait to do it again next year!" UVMC employees also were able to vote on the best team name which was, "Waist Watchers". UVMC CEO, Gwen Matthews also shared her enthusiasm for the Biggest Loser Challenge, *"I was excited to see such an overwhelming amount of participation and excitement generated by our employees around the Biggest Loser Challenge. There was a noticeable difference in the cafeteria in the items employees decided to put on their plates."*

Frank R. Howard Hospital had 13 enthusiastic teams with a total of 66 participants taking part in the challenge. Participants took part in weekly weigh-ins to track their progress, monthly Biggest Loser cooking demonstrations on how to prepare healthy, tasty meals, and weekly wellness activity challenges to keep motivation going. HMH Chef, Kyle Evans, was amazed by how interested employees were in attending his cooking demonstrations and practicing what he shared, *"As captain of the Cream Puffs in the Biggest Loser it was great to see everyone's enthusiasm to make healthy eating choices throughout the 12-week program."* Registered Dietitian Anne Dogali, and HMH Biggest Loser Challenge Director also expressed her enthusiasm for the program. *"It was both fun and inspirational to see each participant's progress throughout the challenge. HMH is excited to have so many employees motivated to improve their health."* Each team encouraged team members to stay on track with their wellness goals through summer vacations and holidays and came out winning big by losing pounds and learning how to incorporate healthy eating and activity into their busy lives. Rick Bockmann, CEO of HMH echoed Dogali's comments, *"Our teams made astounding progress over the past 12 weeks. HMH as a whole is proud to support our employees, Mendocino county and the Willits community to lose weight and make healthier lifestyle choices."*

Mendocino Coast District Hospital had a total of 70 employees participating on one of their 11 Biggest Loser teams. Participants were encouraged to take advantage of MCDH's drop in Wellness Center, onsite gym, and numerous health education workshops offered to assist with weight loss and healthy living goals. *"As a cancer survivor, I know that it is crucial for me to keep my weight under control...For several years, I have wanted to lose those pesky extra pounds, but it took the 'team' approach to motivate me sufficiently to do it! I didn't want to let my team down,"* remarked one participant who reported a 10% weight loss. This challenge was about much more than weight loss as participants were challenged weekly with motivational messages to exercise more, drink water instead of sugary beverages, and to enjoy great local summer produce. *"We are very proud of our teams,"* said MCDH Wellness and Bigger Loser Challenge Coordinator Donna Schuler, who said *"the most important result was the improved quality of life and health that results from losing all the weight."*

All organizations involved expressed gratitude in having the opportunity to work together through the Biggest Loser Challenge and excitement about future partnership possibilities to provide services which foster healthy lifestyle changes to the community as well as staff. The County, UVMC, HMH & MCDH are encouraged by the results of the challenge and hope to take part in another Biggest Loser Challenge in 2014. The Biggest Loser Challenge demonstrates what a united community like Mendocino County is, and what we can accomplish if we work together.

Released by:



Carmel J. Angelo
Chief Executive Officer