

IMPACT

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“Biggest Loser” weight loss challenge shrinks a rural community!

The Situation

Information obtained from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) showed an estimated 2/3 (68%) of American adults are overweight (Body Mass Index [BMI] ≥ 25) or obese (BMI ≥ 30), and an estimated 23 million children are either overweight or obese. The prevalence of overweight and obesity among adolescents has increased from 5% in 1996 to 17% in 2004. Adult men in the nation measured in at 32.2% obese, and adult women at 35.5%. In Idaho, the prevalence of overweight adults has increased significantly in the past decade, from 55.7% in 2000, to 61.3% in 2009, with one-in four (25.1%) adults listed as obese (*Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 2010*).

Families living in Idaho County are facing health issues currently affecting many U.S. families. In 2009, 37.3% of screened Idaho adults had been told they have high cholesterol with 43% of those being in the overweight category. Also, 25.9% of Idaho adults had been told they had high blood pressure. Those who were overweight were twice as likely to have high blood pressure as those who were not overweight (*Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 2010*).

The United State Department of Agriculture recommends adults eat five servings of fruit and vegetables every day. In Idaho 75.4% adults reported they do not eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Those who did not get the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables were significantly more likely to be obese (26.7%) and have high cholesterol (38.9%), than adults who did get five servings a day (19.9% obese, and 32.5% high cholesterol) (*Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 2010*).

The increasing number of people facing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes mellitus, cancer,



Biggest Loser Weight Loss Challenge Kick-off—Fitness Assessment.

and obesity in Idaho illustrates the need to better educate Idaho's population on the importance of diet and exercise in the prevention of these health risk concerns. Investment in effective community-based disease-prevention programs that promote increased physical activity and good nutrition are needed in Idaho County.

Our Response

To address the lack of rural educational programs in the areas of healthy lifestyles, physical activity and healthy nutritional choices, University of Idaho Extension in Idaho County partnered with a local hospital, and fitness club to develop the group “Our Health Our Community.” Monthly meetings were held to develop a series of educational forums and events to address the rise in obesity rates and chronic disease rates in our rural community. The most successful community event has been the “Biggest Loser” Weight Loss Challenge.

The Idaho County “Biggest Loser” Weight Loss Challenge is designed as a community-wide physical activity, and nutrition education campaign, including media spots, and local community awareness. The challenge begins in January and continues for three months to utilize the “New Year’s resolution” motivational tactic. Participants (ages 15 and older) are charged a minimal fee to cover the cost of the challenge awards, and can sign up as individuals and/or teams. Participants attend a kick-off event and receive a packet that contains challenge rules, scheduled educational classes, healthy lifestyle handouts, food logs, weigh-in sheets, five fitness center passes, and a healthy lifestyle quiz.

For the finale, participants receive points for every pound and percent of body fat lost. Monetary awards are provided to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place female and male individual winners, and to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winning teams. The goal is to provide a competitive and educational healthy lifestyle program to improve overall health in a rural setting.

Program Outcomes

The Idaho County Biggest Loser Weight Loss Challenge has been offered by Our Health Our Community for the past three years. During the 2011 challenge, participants were given a retrospective pre-post survey during the educational presentation on metabolism, nutrition and physical activity. In addition, a three month follow-up survey was mailed to assess the amount and types of actions/behaviors that participants had taken as a result of attending. Surveys were mailed to 80 participants, with (17) completed and returned for a 21% response rate (see Table 1).

Table 1. Biggest loser weight loss challenge, Metabolism & Me educational program, 3 month follow-up survey results, 2011.

1.	Eat snacks/ meals frequently (5-6 times/day)	41%
2.	Eat smaller portions	88%
3.	Follow USDA Food Pyramid guidelines	71%
4.	Participate in strength training exercises 3+ days/week	53%
5.	Participate in 150+ minutes of cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise weekly	47%
6.	Total Weight Loss	197.4 lbs.

Since 2009, 47 men and 541 women have participated in the Biggest Loser Weight Loss Challenge—32% completing the full program. Based on the program evaluation results, healthy lifestyle knowledge and behavior change was evident. The total combined weight loss of participants who

healthy lifestyle knowledge and behavior change was evident. The total combined weight loss of participants who completed the three month challenges over the past three years is 2,357.2 lbs., with an average body fat percentage loss of 2.8%.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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