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Leaf Rapids

Leaf Rapids' Biggest Losers

They call themselves the Leaf Rapids Biggest Losers. No, they don't have self-esteem issues and this group has not (yet) appeared on the NBC television hit show "Biggest Loser," but they have been losing weight. In fact, all together, 10 people from Leaf Rapids have lost about 100 pounds in the last year and kept it off.

Penny Howlett, CDPI committee member and an employee at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre, said the weight loss program has been a highlight of the CDPI program in her community. "I've seen a difference," she said. "Even the people that came for awhile and dropped out have been keeping their weight off."

The success is based on group support and education. The group meets weekly at the Health Centre and everybody weighs in. They exchange recipes and ideas on ways to lose weight and eat well. "People are

watching how they cook as much as what they cook," said Howlett. The group has invited a dietitian to talk about healthy eating and specific topics such as the glycemic index (GI). They learned that choosing low GI carbohydrates produces only small fluctuations in blood glucose and insulin levels, and thus reduces the risk of heart disease and diabetes and is a key to sustainable weight loss.

Howlett said since the program was started she has notice that people are making use of the health centre fitness room, walking more, cooking meals in a more healthy way and talking to other people about weight loss. For a time there was a weekly recreational dance and in the winter there was a snowshoeing group.

"I've heard from people that they feel better and that they love to go for a walk because it makes them feel better, gives them more energy, and they just feel better about themselves," said Howlett. "A few have had their high blood pressure go down just by walking and watching what they eat."

The message of good nutrition and other chronic disease prevention ideas are brought to children in the community with a teddy bear clinic. Stations are set up in the school with various healthy living themes and children can bring their dolls or teddy bears for the doctor to examine. One visual presentation, kept on the pop machine, is especially revealing. Baby bottles are labelled with a variety of liquids people might give their children and filled with the amount of sugar cubes that liquid

would hold. For example, chocolate milk has the equivalent of 12 cubes of sugar, unsweetened apple juice 13, unsweetened orange juice 11, Kool-aid, 14, pop 12, breast milk 8, and formula has the equivalent of 8 sugar cubes.

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“Remember to brush your child’s teeth,” advised Howlett.



Take Note

“All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche

“Everywhere is walking distance if you have the time.”

- Stephen Wright