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Neepawa

Rising to the Challenge and taking a Mexican Cruise with Shoes

Falling out of a tree was not what Jim Aitken had in mind several years ago when he went out to do some trimming. But accidents happen, and for Jim, now 67, the result was hip surgery and a big slowdown in physical activity over the year that followed. What got Jim going again was a Mexican Cruise with Shoes! That's right – a Mexican Cruise with Shoes, a team walking program devised by the CDPI Committee in Neepawa in 2006. Teams of five people, formed from business staffs, families, or just groups of friends and neighbours, challenged each other to get active, walk or do some physical exercise over a 17-week period. Team members kept track of how far they walked and also got a mile credit for every ten minutes of other exercise they did. Every

One wintry night one of the couples appeared at their neighbour's door, and said, "Get on your stuff, you're walking us back home." Home was a mile away, so both couples got their exercise that night.

week the stats were calculated and posted on a border around the inside of the library. The goal was to get to Cancun.

Jim's family formed a team in which the internal rivalry became intense. Jim bought an exercise bike and he and his grandson, who was in soccer, track and basketball, phoned to spur each other on to beat the female component of the team. Besides the exercise bike, Jim got out as often as he could to shovel or get active in other ways. By Week 11 the Aitken team, otherwise known as The Hot Tamales, had made it to Cancun and by the end of the 17 weeks they were almost to Brazil. The team admits that it was their 15-year-old who logged almost half of those miles. Four other teams also made it to South America and nearly half of the 36 teams made it to Cancun. Challenges every few weeks kept the teams going, with Mexican-themed prizes like fruit trays or cacti. One group of rural neighbours phoned each other to say, "Let's go for a walk," but one wintry night one of the couples appeared at their neighbour's door, and said, "Get on your stuff, you're walking us back home." Home was a mile away, so both couples got in their two miles that night!

Since 2006, people in Neepawa have enjoyed many other CDPI activities, including a pedometer program which allows walkers to chart their progress. The first week, the team charted what they normally walked, and then in the following three weeks, they tried to work up to 10,000 steps a day. The team that came up with the largest increase

on average won their own barbecue party, with hamburgers, shrimp kebabs, fruit trays, and drinks. Twenty-eight businesses in town signed up with 238 people participating in all. This summer 50 seniors were using the pedometers in an 11-week program, which included a monthly information evening on health-related topics like avoiding falls, stretching, balance and healthy eating. A one-month pedometer program in June for mentally handicapped people was so successful that it was extended into the summer. Participants were keen to see those numbers and try to make them bigger every day.

Neepawa is getting active, and even with all the other fun, people have been asking CDPI to bring back the Mexican Cruise with Shoes. Keep an eye out for it – an inspiring new Cruise could be back in Neepawa soon!

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Take Note

Did you know?

- Males in Manitoba are over twice as likely to die as the result of injuries as are females.
- The rate of deaths from injuries in Manitoba is highest among seniors.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/docs/injuriesmb.pdf>

Consequences of Falls

- Restriction of activity/functional deterioration.
- Loss of confidence/fear of falling in future.
- Pain/limitation of activity following a fall.
- Decreased quality of life.
- Social isolation.
- Depression and feelings of helplessness.

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/fallsprevention/project/reports/speaker/Canberra.pdf>