

# Local business accepts the challenge

The staff at one Kingston workplace didn't let sugary treats and other unhealthy goodies get the best of them last holiday season. They worked as a group to meet their goal: to maintain their weight over a notoriously tempting time of year.

Last November, KFL&A Public Health's Motiv8 initiative issued its Holiday Challenge 2008: Maintain, Don't Gain campaign. "The holidays are a time when people gain weight," said Debra Vine, a member of the Motiv8 initiative. "We are bombarded with food and beverages at every social gathering. And busy schedules cause stress and leave us with little time to be active."

"And it's not just the year-end holidays that spawn food overload, many social events, meetings, holidays, celebrations are centred around food", said Debra.

Melanie Steers is a manager at K3C Community Counselling Centres in downtown Kingston. She decided to ask her staff to do the Holiday Challenge. Twelve of 25 employees took up the gauntlet, including Melanie.

"We were so impressed because even though this was created to be an individual challenge in our community," said Debra, "K3C took the initiative to do this challenge as a workplace."

"We made it fun," said Melanie, "we had great camaraderie and we teased each other, and doing this as a team made it much easier. We supported each other by not bringing in unhealthy snacks to work, and encouraging each other."

The Motiv8 Holiday Challenge was designed to help people manage the triggers that cause weight gain. Each week, participants received e-mail reminders, and had on-line access to articles and tips, as well as recipes, food and activity logs, and other resources.

"I brought in a scale from home," said Melanie, "and each person weighed themselves before and after the competition. Everybody's weight was kept private." Small prizes were offered to add a little more incentive, plus staff agreed to donate \$3 to the United Way for each pound gained over the holidays, a figure that K3C agreed to double.

So how well did the gang at K3C Counselling Centres do?

"Four people lost weight, four people maintained their weight, and four people gained a bit—between one and three pounds. And the people who maintained or even lost said they probably would have gained if they hadn't been part of the challenge. I'm one of the people who gained—one pound -- and I know that it would have been more if I hadn't been careful.

"We got great feedback from staff—we'll definitely do it again next year."

The Motiv8 year-round message centres around the most effective ways to achieve the health benefits the body and mind need: Eat a healthy breakfast every day; Re-think your snack; Be active every day; Choose water; Enjoy more vegetables and fruit; Make meals at home; Breast-feed babies; Watch less TV. "You don't have to tackle all eight at once," said Debra, "Practise one behaviour at a time until you feel comfortable then move on to the next."



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