

Update provided by Andrea Fletcher, MPH, Morrow County CHIP Coordinator

For twelve weeks, Morrow County residents were challenged to participate in a weight loss competition and healthy lifestyle program called the Biggest Winner. Three hundred and nineteen people registered. The range of body mass index measurements at the inception of the program ranged from 22 to 54, with an average of 36. At the conclusion of the program, participants in Boardman, Heppner/Lexington, Irrigon and Ione lost over one ton (2,614 pounds) of body weight!

Scott Carter, Stacy Shelton and Sharon Camarillo of Ione; Dennis Lien, Sarah Good and Virginia Voight of Heppner; Becky Fox, Richard Nelson and Marty Brown of Irrigon; and Bill Hancock, Barbara Hemnes and Lisa Pringle of Boardman earned cash prizes totaling \$3,600.00 by losing the greatest percentage of body weight in their respective community's competition.

One participant expressed, "Our whole family made changes to our life, cooking, eating and exercising." Another stated, "I thought it was a great program. I came away with lots of good hints and ideas and a better feeling about myself." A third indicated, "When the weather is moderate we can walk outside, but Morrow County really needs places that people can access to be active in a safe and accessible environment, especially for our older adult population."

The availability of recreational facilities can influence individuals' and communities' choices to engage in physical activity. Access to places for active physical fitness conditioning or recreational sports activities is associated with higher physical activity levels, which in turn is associated with lower rates of adverse health outcomes associated with poor diet, lack of physical activity, and obesity. Conversations have been occurring in the communities to identify space and create a plan to ensure that affordable, accessible and safe environments are available to give people more opportunity to increase their physical activity levels.

MCCHIP would like to acknowledge the contributions made to the program and thank local restaurants and grocers that supported healthier eating choices, individuals and volunteers who promoted physical activities and instructors that provided fitness classes, the Morrow County Health District and Columbia River Community Health Services for donating lab services and the Oregon Office of Rural Health for CHIP grant support.

A significant portion of the county population is affected by, or at risk for developing chronic disease, which was determined by examining data and information collected in the county-wide health needs assessment. Because health behaviors that contribute to the development of many chronic diseases include obesity, inactivity and tobacco use, the intent of the program was to encourage healthy lifestyle changes in those areas. The MCCHIP, a partnership of community members and health, human and public service organizations, initiated the Biggest Winner program to increase awareness and educate the community about these local health issues.

The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) of Morrow County hosted “Work on Wellness” sessions in Heppner and Boardman on April 24 and 25, with local businesses to examine the health needs identified for Morrow County, opportunities for businesses to affect the health of the community and options for worksites interested in developing wellness programs to encourage healthy employees and reduce health care costs.

Andrea Fletcher opened the session with a presentation of information about the health needs of Morrow County, how the social and physical environment people live, work and play in (livability of a community) affects well-being, and how a community working together can advance the quality of life for individuals through thoughtfully planned and coordinated programs and services coupled with a supportive environment.

Jan Noland, Citycounty Insurance Services, presented a summary of what influences health care insurance premium costs, how modifying the lifestyle factors that contribute to the development of chronic disease (overweight/obesity, tobacco use and physical activity) can address the future decline of health status for individuals and decrease health related costs.

Dawn Robbins, Oregon Health Authority Wellness@Work Program, navigated <https://dwp1.dhs.oregon.gov/WellnessAtWork/>, a web-based tool with free resources available to businesses both large and small, to gauge the business’ health environment, learn about assessing employee interests, needs and health risks and generate ideas for workplace activities or programs to support employee wellness.

Tricia Rollins, Bank of Eastern Oregon; Marcia Kemp, United States Forrest Service, Heppner Ranger District; Roz Pedro, Conagra Foods Lamb Weston; and Karen Kegler, Boardman Foods, Inc. described their organization’s philosophy about healthy employees, incentives, programs and physical environment that prompted them to institute worksite wellness initiatives.

Work on Wellness was funded by the Northwest Health Foundation and supported by CHIP, Columbia River Community Health Services, Morrow County Public Health Department and Commission on Children and Families, Community Counseling Solutions, Morrow County Health District, Heppner and Boardman Chamber of Commerce, Dale Bates and CenturyLink.

Morrow and Umatilla County continue to work collaboratively on the Community Resource Guide, two page "quick look summary sheet" for professionals and the initiation of 211 telephone and internet referral services.

Currently working with Morrow County Health District (Pioneer Memorial Hospital) to make the community-based health needs assessment available on their website.

The CHIP of Morrow County meets quarterly, on a rotating basis, in the communities of Boardman, Irrigon, Heppner and Ione.

We encourage you to visit the website <http://ohsu.edu/MCCHIP> if you are interested in improving your health or the wellness of Morrow County!