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Weight program aims to lose big

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Northern Kentucky University is expecting a lot of people to be big losers this fall. A group of 191 people weighing a collective 28,745.5 pounds are participating in the campus' Big Loser Program.

Remke Markets is donating a pound of food for every pound lost between now and Thanksgiving to the 11th and Banklick Food Pantry in Covington.

"Kentucky is now the fifth worst state in the nation for obesity," said Karen L. Campbell, NKU's assistant director of wellness. "I felt we had to take immediate action to not only raise awareness, but to offer a more comprehensive and supportive environment on campus to help people adopt healthier lifestyle habits."

Campbell's motivation isn't only to increase the health of the participants but to have an effect on public policy.

"Obesity costs Kentucky more than \$1 billion a year in extra health care. We need to recognize our fiscal responsibilities; money that is spent in one area is money that could be spent somewhere else," she said.

Lisa Schultz, a staff member of the Kinesiology Department, gradually gained weight after the birth of her twins.

"It was convenient since I work here," said Schultz. "I joined Weight Watchers, which was OK. I had to travel to the meetings in the evenings after work, so it wasn't as convenient as this program will be. I figured that it wouldn't hurt me to try it."

Campbell sees several advantages to the Big Loser program.

"Health promotion behavior change campaigns are proven to be an effective strategy because they provide multiple interventions for change," she said.

Campbell says the first key to success is bringing people together.

"This in itself helps to add a sense of community into the behavior change process, underlining the important goal of incorporating wellness into the fabric of our NKU culture," she said.

Additionally, the wellness department will be holding weekly educational sessions that Campbell says will "offer the potential for new healthy lifestyle skill development to help individuals through challenging periods of their wellness journey."

The final part of the program is recognition. Besides the donations from Remke, the male and female with the greatest percentage of weight loss - not number of pounds - will get six weeks with a personal trainer from NKU's Campus Recreation Center.

The Big Loser program is part of an overall wellness initiative at NKU called "Wellness ... It's Easy!" Other aspects include a weekly healthy cooking program

called "Healthy Eats," and "Walk for Your Health" is a series of maps to walking routes throughout campus. The initiative will also offer roaming blood pressure checks for employees.

"Employee health and wellness matters every day at NKU, and our culture encourages, supports and offers exemplary health-related programs in the workplace," Campbell said.

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