

Everyone knows that eating right and exercising are important for your health. But finding time for yourself can be difficult with today's hectic schedules.

The AMH Wellness Department in Neligh is working hard to change that.

Staff members, Natalie McKillip, Cassie Schindler and Kellie Gossman, launched the "Biggest And Best Loser Contest" in January to encourage people to get fit and shed some excess pounds after the holiday season. Initial weigh-ins and measurements were taken the week of January 13 and concluded March 17. There were categories for men, women and teams of four. A cash prize was awarded to the first place winners as an incentive.

The program included a strength and conditioning class twice a week, unlimited use of the hospital's wellness room and inspirational emails each week. The emails charted each participant's progress and included fitness tips and healthy recipe ideas. A total of 165 people signed up for the contest and the results were AMAZING! Some teams lost more than 100 pounds, or 13 percent of their original body mass. Nearly half of the contestants dropped a minimum of 10 pounds...but some lost 30, 40 and even 50 pounds.

Wellness staff members take time to get input from their clients to ensure their class times fit the needs of the people. Many of the classes begin at 5:15 p.m. and end at 6:15 p.m., so participants can squeeze in some exercise after work, but before supertime with their families. A new Yolates class, a combination of yoga and pilates, is beginning just as the "Biggest and Best Loser" contest ends. In addition, a second program will start soon. "The Choose to Loose Challenge" is a new six-month challenge which begins in April. Staff members decided to start this program for participants who would like some continued motivation to lose weight and stay in shape. They are offering discounted rates to use the Wellness Room and are planning more classes in the future.

The AMH Wellness staff members are a great asset to the community and surrounding area. Their knowledge of nutrition and exercise helps many people every day. They are patient and kind to their clients, while offering motivation and useful tools to improve their overall health. The AMH Wellness staff members are truly "public health champions" and very deserving of the Dr. Richard Raymond 2014 Public Health Champion Award.