Weight Loss Among Staff at Newport Grammar School

The Tennessee Department of Education, in collaboration with Tennessee Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, implemented Coordinated School Health in 130 schools across the state of Tennessee in August, 2006. New legislation and funding provided the incentive needed to support the development of local infrastructure in school systems. This change was designed to promote health and wellness for students and staff. As a result, CSH for Newport City School System decreased barriers that prevent teachers from achieving a higher health status. Unlike many others in the work force, teachers are at risk of heart disease and serious health problems because they….are under unusual stress, deprive themselves of much needed physical activity, and at times have unhealthy eating behaviors because of time constraints.

Some health and achievement links in the vicious cycle include:

Teachers who are overweight/obese are at a higher risk of having more health issues and use more sick days;

Teachers who are overweight/obese have a tendency to have low self esteem and seem unaware of other’s feelings;

Teachers who are overweight/obese have poor self confidence and low standards of achievement;

However, teachers with healthy habits of exercise and follow a balanced diet tend to have better social, emotional, and decision making skills. Thus, healthy lifestyles are associated with productive job performance.

Teachers and staff are like parents that must take care of themselves before they can take care of others. At Newport Grammar School I saw the relationship between teacher’s health and student’s health education flounder to the top. Therefore, staff must be healthy to encourage healthy habits among our youth. I realized I had to get Newport City employees on board with me first, in order for them to begin making healthy decisions in the classroom. . So it began. I worked on getting teachers and staff the means to help decrease stress, lower weight and blood pressure and finally improve their overall health.

As health coordinator, I began providing them with extras that were not required. I began doing for them even when they did not ask for my assistance. And finally, I bought goodies for them that made them feel special. I began working on forming walking clubs, weight loss programs and even gathering passes at our local community center for them to enter for free. I scheduled weekly kickboxing and yoga classes. Finally, I realized that I had the open space and the funding to put in our own workout center that would assist them in the everyday battle. The first year, we were able to purchase commercial sized equipment. Three treadmills, an elliptical machine, two stationary exercise bicycles, and a four stack weight machine with workout benches and a leg press. The next year, the room was equipped with a 42 in Television with a DVD player for convenience. Now, there were no excuses, the teachers could exercise. It was up to them.

Later, over the next two years, in-services were provided to help encourage employees with straight talk about their health. And the number of teachers and staff began to rise. More and more, I heard how appreciative they were to have such a workout room. But it was not until I noticed one pre-K teacher had lost a lot of weight that I began to ask how she had done it. She gladly responded that it was the exercise room. She claimed that until I put this room in she did not have the money to join a fitness club or weight loss programs and that this room had enabled her to focus on her. I thanked her sharing her story and began to question if there were others. As it turns out there are others but she seems to be my leading lady. Since April of 2009 Debbie Mardis recorded losing 45 pounds and looks great. She continues to work out faithfully and maintain her girlly figure that everyone wants. I have included a picture of Mrs. Debbie before the transformation and one of her after. Congratulations, Mrs. Debbie! Keep up the good work!!