

SMALL TALK WITH *Jana Weeks*

BY KIM KOZLOWSKI
The Detroit News

Jana Weeks is among 1,000 Michigan residents who shed 15,000 collective pounds during The Michigan Matchup, a statewide weight loss contest that started in January and ended in April.

The contest was coordinated by HealthyWage, a company founded after research showed that cash rewards triple the effectiveness of weight loss programs and now awards cash prizes to top performing individuals and corporate teams in communities across the nation.

Weeks, 39, of Lansing and four co-workers at Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Community Mental Health Authority formed a team, and lost weight. They won the \$3,000 third-place prize.

How much weight did you lose? I lost 49 pounds during the contest, but overall I lost 82 since I started trying to lose weight the day after Thanksgiving. I still have 25 pounds to go. I feel great, and I am a lot healthier.

How did you do it? I gave up everything I've ever loved: salt, butter, sweets, alcohol, pop, coffee and started eating fresh fruits and vegetables, very little red meat, mostly chicken, turkey and fish. I weighed out everything and portioned everything out and the weight seemed to fly off me. But I was also part of a team trying to lose weight, so that's what helped me avoid eating a cookie at a holiday party or having a drink at my engagement party. I couldn't let them down. I also started to play volleyball three days a week, and run three miles three days a week.

Why did you want to lose weight? I've always been athletic and been able to keep the weight off. But I am getting older, and when my boyfriend and I moved in together, we became sedentary and I stopped playing volleyball and running. And he is a wonderful cook — he often cooked steak wrapped in bacon with slabs of butter and piles of potatoes. It was wonderful, but it packed on the pounds. I also wanted to lose weight because I had a feeling a wedding was on the horizon. I was right: We're getting married Sept. 24.

Your team won \$3,000. What will you do with it? Split five ways, that's \$600 each. I'll buy a wedding dress.

kkozlowski@detnews.com

