

How to lose weight in 2011

By MONICA DRAKE
 Of The Oakland Press

One of the most popular New Year's resolutions each year is to lose weight.

Even if you've already abandoned your diet for 2011, it's not too late to try again.

According to a poll by the Marist Institute of Public Opinion, 16 percent of people making a resolution this year want to lose weight.

"New Year's is a time to wipe the slate clean," said Mary Azzoli, Director of Interactive Media Systems for the Marist Institute. "It allows individuals the opportunity to get their physical houses in order if they believe they have neglected their health. The end of one year and beginning of another also reminds us that we are another year older, coupled with the reality that perhaps we haven't taken the best care of ourselves during the holiday season."

The Oakland County government realizes the benefits of losing weight and staying healthy. Each year, they spend \$400,000 on promoting health and wellness for their employees, which has resulted in an overall no increase in health insurance costs since 2007 when the program started. In 2007, Oakland County spent \$38 million on health, which, on average, has stayed the same for the past four years. In the years prior to this, the health insurance was going up 9 percent each year, and had it continued to rise, they would be at approximately \$50 million this year.

"We basically reversed the trend. We're the same in 2010 as we were in 2007," said Human Resources Director Nancy Scarlet.

The bulk of the \$400,000 is spent on a health screening to

test for blood pressure, body mass index, cholesterol and glucose levels and a health risk assessment survey to give employees a profile about their current health status. Oakland County also offers health classes within their building to make it convenient for employees to get exercise and education.

"The savings are not just what we see in the dollars today, it's the chronic illness that never develops because an employee becomes aware and takes control of a health issue at a stage where they can change their destiny," said Scarlet.

Jennifer Gray, fitness trainer in West Bloomfield Township, said she has found the most successful ways to lose weight are to stay away from simple sugars, eat fruits and vegetables or a whole food supplement, eat small meals throughout the day, keep a positive attitude, do cardiovascular training five days a week and strength training two days each week and keep a food log to keep track of eating habits.

Gray said group accountability and setting realistic goals, such as a goal to lose two pounds each week, keeps people from bailing on their New Year's resolution, which is why she created the Body Beautiful Boot Camp for Women six years ago, the first fitness boot camp created in Michigan.

She rents space from Evolution Fitness Center in West Bloomfield, and employs trainers in Rochester Hills and Royal Oak. The Body Beautiful Boot Camp begins on Jan. 24 in the three locations and lasts 12 to 15 weeks, two or three days each week, depending on participants' preference.

Gray said she has found the average person can lose 36 pounds in 12 weeks.

Incentives also help people stick with their weight loss plan, Gray said. This is why she created a contest in the Body Beautiful Boot Camp. Women are divided into five categories based on how much weight they want to lose. Each category receives three grand prizes, such as the grand prize package including full hair extensions worth \$700, a year membership to Gray's fitness program and \$500 teeth whitening from Studio 32.

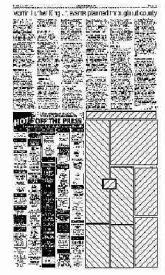
David Roddenberry, co-creator of another "Biggest Loser" contest called the Michigan Match-Up, sponsored by his company HealthyWage, said:

"There's a lot of research that shows that financial incentives are really effective in helping people lose weight and stop smoking and do what they are supposed to do for their health."

In this contest, interested participants can join a team of five by Saturday, Jan. 8, and the team with the greatest total percentage of weight loss by April will win \$10,000 for first place or \$5,000 for second and \$3,000 for third.

More than 90 health clubs throughout Michigan are serving as weigh-in locations, such as Powerhouse Gyms and Snap Fitness Clubs in Oakland County.

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FYI

■ The Oakland County Department of Health & Human Services Division provides health services to the public. For more information, visit oakgov.com/health or call 248-858-1280 for the North Oakland County Health Center, 248-424-7000 for Southfield or 248-926-3300 for Walled Lake.

■ If you are interested in joining a contest to help you lose weight, the deadline to register for the Michigan Match-Up is Saturday. The team with the greatest total percentage of weight loss by April 15 will win \$10,000. To sign up, visit michiganmatch-up.com.

■ For information on fitness trainer Jennifer Gray's Body Beautiful Boot Camp for women visit bodybyjenn.com or call 248-761-2321.



Special to The Oakland Press/MONICA DRAKE

Jennifer Gray, Birmingham resident and fitness trainer in West Bloomfield, is the founder of Body Beautiful Boot Camp for Women, Michigan's first fitness boot camp. She said that exercising in groups and having an accountability partner is one way to reach health goals without backing out.