

SullivanArc is a big loser!

Last Spring, SullivanArc, a not-for-profit organization supplying support to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, announced a weight loss challenge for its staff members. The goal was for staff to lose a half ton of weight, or one thousand pounds combined, by Thanksgiving.

Not only did they reach their goal, but the 151 participants lost an extra 25 pounds, bringing the total weight loss to 1,025 pounds.

The initiative was formulated by Executive Director Ric Schwartz and Wellness Director Kevin Shortall. Not only was it a way to get staff healthier, but as Schwartz says, "A healthy staff is a happy staff."

With the rising costs of healthcare, Schwartz knew that the weight loss, along with annual check-ups, would make those people participating less likely to develop serious illnesses, thus benefiting all staff on the healthcare plan by paying lower premiums.

All staff members who lost weight by

the final weigh-in received an additional paid vacation day in 2017.

To add some competition to the challenge, teams were formed and a secondary contest was initiated to pit teams against each other to lose the most weight. Monthly weigh-ins kept the rivalry alive. There was a continuous buzz among employees, and a culture of healthy eating was adopted overall. People could be seen in the lunchroom with their healthy lunches sharing their weight loss tips.

In the final days of the contest, the top teams were so close that they were sending each other cookies and pizzas to try and "tip the scale."

The top three teams lost a combined

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total of 411 pounds. Since the teams varied in numbers, the final outcomes were measured by percentage of bodyweight lost. The winning team, "The Wolfpack" lost over 9% of their bodyweight, the second and third place teams, "Weapons of Less Consumption" and "Team Shondette" weren't far behind with 8% and 7% losses.

Each of the members of the top three teams received gift cards in addition to the extra paid vacation day.

Not to be left out, and trying to set an example, Executive Director Schwartz participated as well, finishing on the second-place team. He ended up losing the most weight of all staff.

Adding to the success, SullivanArc provided weekly Weight Watchers meetings on-site, reimbursing anyone who signed up and attended 80 percent of the meetings. Healthy cooking classes, organized walks, a fitness center for staff, and gym membership reimbursements also helped bring about the positive results.

At a recent staff holiday party, it was clearly evident that the overall look was that of a slimmer staff. Many staff members had to invest in new clothes for their trimmer selves.

Because it was the first year for the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Some of the members of SullivanArc's team "Weapons of Less Consumption" who came in second place in the weight loss contest. Between them, they lost a total of 105 pounds. Pictured from left: Janet Hanley, Denise Burgio, Cindy Prince, and SullivanArc Executive Director Ric Schwartz

contest, only a portion of the nearly 500 staff participated. However, people are already signing up for the next contest which will start in February.

Schwartz is not only hoping for more participants this year; he is also encouraging staff to pass on their new healthy eating habits to the people with disabilities who live in SullivanArc's 21 residences. "Adopting a healthier lifestyle for the people we support is our ultimate goal," he states.

To learn more about SullivanArc and the services they provide, visit sullivanarc.org.

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