

Walk It Off

By Arielle Estes, Community Relations Director

Rockcastle County's largest employers begin weight-loss challenge

The first of each New Year is typically filled with people setting resolutions and goals to do more (or less) of a certain thing. Many times those goals revolve around better health...making better food choices and exercising more frequently. The Wellness Council at Rockcastle Regional Hospital & Respiratory Care Center decided to capitalize on the momentum of a time of year when people are focused on losing weight and/or becoming healthier...and on January 21, 2013 the challenge was set.

Rockcastle Regional Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Cynthia Burton, RN, came across the idea of a fitness challenge after reading about the staff at the City of Murray and Murray-Calloway County Hospital who lost almost 1,000 pounds in a six-week challenge. Burton approached the Wellness Council at Rockcastle Regional Hospital and the idea turned into a reality.

The Wellness Council is a group of hospital employees who are vested into making Rockcastle Regional Hospital a healthier place. From employee health fairs to healthy food tastings to holiday stress reducers, they embark on a variety of activities and educational events catered towards empowering hospital employees to be healthier.

Numerous studies have shown the impact employee wellness can have on the organization. Less sick time taken, higher productivity levels and improved employee morale

are just some of the benefits. A 2010 study from Harvard University titled "Workplace Wellness programs can generate savings" estimated medical costs fall about \$3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs, and absentee day costs fall by about \$2.73 for every dollar spent. This average return on investment suggests that the wider adoption of such programs could prove beneficial for budgets and productivity as well as health outcomes.

The Wellness Council approached Rockcastle County School Administration with the idea of a six week weight-loss challenge between the employees of the schools and the hospital. After Administration approved the challenge, coordinators from each school volunteered to monitor the progress and complete the necessary weigh-ins. The Wellness Council is organizing the hospital challenge.

Although the challenge has just begun the positive effects are already being seen.



Wellness Council Coordinator Betty Purcell and Lindsay Gabbard, dietitian, register two Rockcastle Regional Hospital employees for the "Walk it Off" program.

Nearly 100 employees from the hospital and 50 from the school system have signed up to make healthier choices and to (hopefully) lose weight. At the end of the six weeks, final weigh-ins will be taken and the winning school or hospital team will receive the trophy and other incentives.

"We have the potential to impact lots of families in our community with Walk it Off," said Wellness Council Coordinator Betty Purcell, RN, MSN. "The challenge has been set to keep a food journal and to log the minutes or steps of exercise taken each day. We hope that families are taking part in the challenge together. The more people we have moving, the healthier we will be!"

Stay tuned for the winner of the first annual Walk it off!

