

JOINT TOWNSHIP HOSPITAL WINS AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION FIT-FRIENDLY AWARD, YET AGAIN.

Joint Township District Memorial Hospital continues to prove that its healing power extends far beyond its walls and into its surrounding community.

For the second year in a row, the hospital and the Grand Lake Health System have been recognized as a Platinum-Level *Start! Fit-Friendly* Company by the American Heart Association's *Start!* movement. Grand Lake was also one of 15 organizations nationwide to be cited for community innovation in fitness.

The prestigious award is given to companies that create and successfully implement programs that help employees eat better and move more. The hospital system was applauded for its year-long fitness challenge called *Road To Fitness*. The program encouraged employees as well as members of the Grand Lake community to increase their physical activity.

Those who signed up for the program earned points by implementing personal exercise routines, participating in local exercise classes and doing community road races. Each activity earned participants points which were used to receive prizes.

Road To Fitness was based off of similar programs done by other hospitals, but with a new twist. Unlike other programs, *Road To Fitness* was based on participation, not skill.

"That is what makes our program unique," says Anne Larger, community outreach director. "You don't have to be good; you just have to do it. I don't care if you walk a 5k or if you run it. The important thing is that you are out there doing it."

Program coordinators are convinced it is this approach that made the program such a success. *Road To Fitness* attracted approximately 300 participants who took part in 10 different races involving running, biking or walking. These same community participants signed up for classes at local YMCAs to earn points and better their health.

The reward was sweet for many. Those who racked up 100 points were entered into a drawing to win prizes like iPods, heart monitors, athletic wear and even a bike. And for many that didn't take too long. Those who did the Oktoberfest Classic 10K, for instance, came home with 20 points as well as a sense of accomplishment.

Some, like Lisa Masonbrink, took full advantage of the challenge.

"The *Road To Fitness* program offered me the motivation to challenge myself physically throughout the year," said Masonbrink, who works as a lab phlebotomist at JTDMMH. "I was able to participate in six of the nine community events as well as attend daily fitness classes at the YMCA. I appreciate those who made the program possible and hope to see it return in 2010."

Grand Lake was one of only 150 companies nationwide to be named as a Platinum Award *Fit-Friendly* company for workplace wellness. Platinum-level employers satisfied five different criteria including offering employees physical activity options in the workplace and demonstrating measurable outcomes related to workplace wellness.

However, it's not the title that has hospital executives filled with pride. It's the fact that Grand Lake has retained the title for the second year in a row. The hospital system received the same prestigious recognition last year for its *Grand Health Challenge*. The weight loss program, which also included wellness education and motivational sessions, had participation from 512 individuals, who lost nearly 6,000 pounds in six months.

The program garnered such interest from the community that the hospital system continued it this year along with its new *Road To Fitness Challenge*. Nearly 370 individuals participated this year losing more than 3,400 pounds. The hospital takes great pride in the program's success. Since it began in 2007, more than 1,300 people in the Grand Lake community have taken part in the program and together shed nearly 13,000 pounds.

"Those numbers are both astounding and encouraging," said Kevin Harlan, president and chief executive officer. "They are evidence that people want the motivation and help to lose weight and that we are meeting a need in our community. It is an honor to know that our hospital has played a role in reshaping individual's lives."

Organizers of the *Grand Health Challenge* worked hard to attract local fire departments. The goal was to help get into shape those very people who spend their lives saving others. The effort worked. Forty-four firefighters signed up for the program and, in many cases, got great satisfaction out of battling each other, rather than a fire.

Chris Kline, whose team "Flab Four" won the overall challenge, says peer pressure is what drove them to the top.

"The four of us worked together and encouraged one another to be successful," said Kline, who serves on the Celina Fire Department. "I loved the idea of competing with the St. Mary's Fire Department because it was yet another competition that we could beat them in besides basketball and football."

Many individuals who started their wellness journey during the 2008 *Grand Health Challenge* were able to keep crucial weight off by participating in the *Road To Fitness* this year. Kathy Gorby, who participated in last year's weight-loss program, said the *Road To Fitness* was key in keeping off the weight.

"*Road To Fitness* helped keep me motivated," Gorby said. "I kept a watchful eye on my calories and participated in the many different opportunities that *Road To Fitness* has to offer. With *Road To Fitness*, I am accountable to myself and able to stay fit and healthy."

It's stories like Gorby's that keeps Grand Lake motivated to create more challenges in the years to come.

"*Road To Fitness* is evidence that Grand Lake is serious about helping our employees get healthy and stay healthy for life, not just for a temporary challenge," Larger said. "We hope to only continue our role in helping the community live a better life." ■



Road to Fitness
CHALLENGE