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A POWERFUL COMBO: GETTING HEALTHY AND GIVING BACK

Seagate Technology motivates employees to boost their health and fitness while helping others.

SHAKOPEE – For Seagate Technology, the Biggest Loser Minnesota Challenge was both a wellness competition and an exercise in team-building and philanthropy. The disk-drive manufacturer used the contest to encourage employees to focus on healthy behaviors while also giving back to the community. Seagate saw great results: the company's nine teams lost a total of 1,346 pounds.

"When employees participate in physical activity and wellness practice, the impact on employee health, attitude, and camaraderie is obvious," says David Brown, chief technologist and a member of the site's executive management team. "We are proud of our success in the Biggest Loser Minnesota Challenge and will continue to support healthy behaviors at our worksite."

Seagate employees thrived while facing competition from other businesses statewide and nine internal teams. In addition to bragging rights, the Seagate teams vied to earn the most money for a local charity. The company pledged to donate \$15,000 to nonprofits on behalf of the employee teams: First place earned \$4,000 for their charity; second place, \$3,000; third place, \$2,000; and teams fourth through ninth each earned \$1,000 for their nonprofit. The winners are:

1. \$4,000 to People Incorporated. This team lost an average of 3.57 percent of their body weight, earned 20,442 exercise points and 3,900 nutrition points.
2. \$3,000 to MN Assistance Council for Vets. This team lost an average of 2.15 percent of their body weight, earned 19,607 exercise points and 3,145 nutrition points.
3. \$2,000 to Store to Door. This team lost an average of 4.13 percent of their body weight, earned 17,752 exercise points and 2,972 nutrition points.
4. \$1,000 to the American Red Cross. This team lost an average of 2.4 percent of their body weight, earned 16,803 exercise points and 2,629 nutrition points.
5. \$1,000 to High Tech Kids. This team lost an average of 1.81 percent of their body weight, earned 15,341 exercise points and 2,381 nutrition points.
6. \$1,000 to Feed My Starving Children. This team lost an average of 2.81 percent of their body weight, earned 12,932 exercise points and 2,403 nutrition points.
7. \$1,000 to Second Chance Animal Rescue. This team lost an average of 2.49 percent of their body weight, earned 10,819 exercise points and 2,490 nutrition points.
8. \$1,000 to Habitat for Humanity. This team lost an average of 1.84 percent of their body weight, earned 11,022 exercise points and 2,136 nutrition points.
9. \$1,000 to MN Teen Challenge. This team lost an average of 2.58 percent of their body weight, earned 8,373 exercise points and 1,733 nutrition points.

In the 2011 Biggest Loser Minnesota Challenge, 22,000 Minnesotans lost 76,048 pounds during the twelve-week wellness competition. Minnesotans also earned 27,749,925 nutrition points and exercised 383,807 hours — the time it would take to walk around the earth 46 times.

The Challenge's overall goal is to create a fun community activity that encourages Minnesotans to eat better and move more. They could accomplish that goal by participating in one, two or three of the Challenge's categories: nutrition, exercise and weight loss.

"This isn't about rapid or sudden weight loss," says Tom Mason, president of the Alliance for a Healthier Minnesota. "It's about workplaces and communities establishing a culture that encourages people to take charge of their own health, choosing healthier lifestyle behaviors that can be maintained long-term."

Open to all Minnesotans, this free statewide competition featured 14 divisions each made up of tens — or even hundreds — of smaller teams. Most participants teamed up with family, friends and coworkers, and some dedicated challengers competed as individuals.

While all Minnesota Challenge participants made progress towards healthier exercise and nutrition habits, some of them dropped as much as 20 percent of their body weight. And the top 100 performers in the weight loss category lost an average of 37 pounds each.

Nearly one-third of Minnesota Challenge participants came from small- and medium-sized businesses and chambers of commerce from across the state. This Business/Chamber division, made up of 7,500 participants on hundreds of small business teams, placed in the top three in the final rankings of all three competition categories. Research has shown that when businesses support their employees' wellness, they employ healthier workers and see a big impact on their bottom line. The CDC reports that more than 75 percent of employer health care costs and productivity losses are related to employee lifestyle choices.

Seagate leaders saw broad participation in the competition from its executive site management on down. Each internal team was sponsored by an executive and captained by a manager or director. In addition to having more staffers engaged in healthy behaviors overall, Seagate noticed a significant increase in employees' physical activity and nutrition awareness. On average, participants earned 14,788 exercise points and 2,643 nutrition points from working out and eating healthily during the competition.

Some of the company's success stories include an employee who tripled his weekly running mileage and lost almost 11 percent of his body weight, and a woman who got back on track with exercise and lost 19 pounds. "The Biggest Loser Minnesota Challenge is a great team-building event," says Robert German, captain of Seagate's Red Cross team. "The healthy competition motivated you to do your very best in the areas of diet, exercise, and weight management."

The 22,000 Challenge participants logged their last round of activities Friday, April 15. Those who placed among the top 1,000 in each category were entered into a prize drawing. JoAnn Buck of Burnsville won the competition's grand prize, a trip to see The Biggest Loser Season 11 finale in Los Angeles, California. Four other lucky participants received a free one-year membership to Snap Fitness. The fitness membership winners were Captain Kate Jones, an employee of the McLeod County Jail, Cory Marquart of the University of Minnesota Morris, Cindi Rulli of White Bear Lake Public Schools and Carla Peck of Burnsville, an employee of Hennepin County.

The 2011 Minnesota Challenge was the second wellness competition offered by the Alliance for a Healthier Minnesota, with a third Challenge on the way for early 2012. During summer 2010, with the help of General Mills, the Alliance developed a relationship with NBC's Biggest Loser. A pilot wellness competition called the Biggest Loser Summer Challenge brought 10,000 employees of Alliance member companies together to shed more than 37,000 pounds, exercise 16 million minutes and earn millions of nutrition points by making healthy food choices. The Alliance for a Healthier Minnesota's Biggest Loser Challenge competitions are web-based and powered by RedBrick Health.

About Alliance for a Healthier Minnesota

The Alliance for a Healthier Minnesota is a group of Minnesota companies joined together to create fun, engaging and informative events and competitions to help Minnesotans get and stay healthy. Members of the Alliance include Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cargill, General Mills, Medica, Medtronic, the Midwest Dairy Association, Target, UnitedHealth Group and the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). Learn more at HealthierMN.com.