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Yuba-Sutter Obesity Rates Alarming

Getting Little for a Big, Healthy Rivalry Between Yuba County and Sutter County Residents

Residents of Yuba County and Sutter County will be encouraged to compete against each other in a 2016 healthy weight loss challenge that will play on 165 years of rivalry between the two counties. Health care organizations, health club, media, and business partners are being sought to make the challenge a success.

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday night directed county staff to craft a competition in cooperation with Yuba County that is expected to roll out at the end of January, 2016, and last for three months. Earlier on Tuesday, Yuba County supervisors heard an informational presentation about the proposed challenge and expressed interest in having a cross-river competition.

The concept is to encourage residents to recognize a growing obesity problem in our region, and to voluntarily take healthy steps to reduce their weight and educate themselves about healthy eating and lifestyle choices.

It is believed a competition between residents of the two counties—creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the decades-long rivalry between Marysville and Yuba City high schools that brought thousands of residents out for the Big-Little Game—will increase participation. The rivalry between the residents and businesses on the east and west banks of the Feather River dates back to the founding of the cities of Yuba City and Marysville in 1849 and 1850, respectively.

A number of communities in the United States have initiated weight loss challenges in the past five to 10 years to address rising rates of obesity and the accompanying health risks, which include high rates of diabetes. Challenges conducted in other communities have been designed to be educational and rewarding, have involved enthusiastic community partners in the business, health, and media sectors, and have generated a great deal of discussion about obesity, its related health impacts, eating healthy, exercising, and lifestyle.

According to the California Department of Public Health, 30 percent of Sutter County adults and 32 percent of Yuba County adults are obese. These rates exceed the average rate of obesity in California of 24.8 percent by 20 percent and 30 percent, respectively. And we're growing, literally. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, California's obesity rate was 18.7 percent in 2000 and just 9.9 percent in 1990.

One result of our high obesity rates are higher rates of diabetes. According to the California Department of Public Health, Sutter County residents have a 44 percent higher rate of diabetes, and Yuba County residents have a 71 percent higher rate of diabetes, than the rest of the state as a whole.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, people who are obese, compared to those with a normal or healthy weight, are at increased risk for many serious diseases and health conditions, including the following:

- All-causes of death (mortality)
- High blood pressure (Hypertension)
- High LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol, or high levels of triglycerides (Dyslipidemia)

- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, colon, kidney, gallbladder, and liver)
- Low quality of life
- Mental illness such as clinical depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders^{4,5}
- Body pain and difficulty with physical functioning

Even a modest weight loss, such as 5 to 10 percent of total body weight, is likely to produce health benefits, such as improvements in blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugars, according to the Centers for Disease Control. To facilitate understanding of the importance of losing weight, and to encourage healthy weight loss as a community goal, Supervisors Dan Flores and Jim Whiteaker have been discussing with staff the concept of a healthy weight loss challenge capitalizing on the longstanding rivalry between the residents on the west bank of the Feather River and the residents on the east bank of the Feather River.

Sutter County staff will work with staff from Yuba County to draft details of a challenge and find community, business, health sector, and media partners. Drafting the plan will involve Public Health Officers and Public Health staff from both counties and legal review by County Counsel. The best practices of previous challenges will be reviewed in modeling a challenge for the residents of Sutter and Yuba counties. Recommended rules for a Yuba County vs. Sutter County Healthy Weight Loss Challenge will be brought back to both Boards in the near future for final approval.

Health clubs, health care organizations, weight loss clinics, media organizations, and potential business sponsors are encouraged to contact Sutter County Public Information Officer Chuck Smith if they wish to participate in the challenge by hosting weigh-ins, providing prize incentives, providing nutritional or physical fitness educational materials or opportunities, or other means of sponsoring or participating in the event. Smith can be reached at csmith@co.sutter.ca.us, at (530) 822-7100, or (530) 844-0453.