

Comprehensive health program making believers



Rocky Wilson/ Chieftain

Dr. Kenneth Rose, left, and Wallowa Memorial Hospital's registered dietitian, Margaret Lamm, are both involved in the Community Health Improvement Program, which includes a strong focus on nutrition.

By Rocky Wilson Wallowa County Chieftain

In July 2014, Wallowa Memorial Hospital (WMH) was notified it would receive a \$40,500 grant targeted toward improving overall health in Wallowa County.

Money assured, the hospital organized, offered at a greatly reduced price, and now is well into implementing a comprehensive health improvement plan that's receiving rave reviews from most participants.

One sample comes from Marcy Hamilton of Joseph. "I thought the program was amazing," she says. "I loved it. I have more energy, am thinking clearer, and am more excited about getting older."

Inaugurated in 1988 by Dr. Hans Diehl, the Comprehensive Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) selected by WMH in which to invest its grant stresses a plant-based diet, moderate exercise, water consumption, personal socialization, and stress management.

WMH nutritionist Margaret Lamm, one of four licensed facilitators for the program, says CHIP includes much more than food, yet that's what gets top billing "because it's the hardest part to change."

In regard to diet, CHIP endorses the benefits of eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts.

Twenty-seven years' worth of statistics gleaned from more than 65,000 CHIP graduates worldwide suggest

that processed foods, dairy products, red meat, and eggs consumed in excess can prove detrimental to one's health.

A 15-person pilot program conducted in summer of 2014 was followed by two 50-person classes — each including 18 sessions lasting 90 minutes — from late September to mid-November 2014, and mid-January to early March 2015, and a third class began in April.

Results have been so positive, says hospital general surgeon Dr. Kenneth Rose — another licensed facilitator along with Dr. Emily Sheahan and WMH Director of Medical Records Kathy Webster — that WMH will support two additional CHIP classes beginning Sept. 8, 2015, and in the spring of 2016.

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*— Marcy Hamilton, past participant
of the CHIP program*

More grants are being sought to continue the work. The \$40,500 grant secured in 2014 from the Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO) has allowed people from Wallowa County to enroll in the program for \$99, instead of a normal cost of about \$500.

Dr. Rose says most participants in the classes, through personal insurance, have been reimbursed for that \$99 fee. Included in that \$99 investment — in addition to nightly live and video lectures, cooking demonstrations, and hot, healthy meals — are a packet of written material including a textbook, workbook, and cookbook and three free blood draws to calibrate successes of programs.

Overall results from blood draws taken from participants of the first two full classes regarding total cholesterol, LDL (or bad) cholesterol, and weight loss are known.

In the two 50-person classes in 2014, total cholesterol levels exceeded acceptable norms in more than 70 percent of class participants when the programs began. During the two-month courses, participants ate plant-based meals on class nights and were encouraged to follow a similar regimen throughout the entire two months.

Hamilton, the woman who says she's now seeing life through new eyes, says she'd always been a chronic dieter, but now has learned she can eat more than ever of the right kinds of foods.

Both Lamm and Dr. Rose are excited thus far about results here of the CHIP program.

Lamm says participants regularly tell her, "I can do this. I didn't realize it was that easy." Dr. Rose simply says it's rewarding to see others getting excited about their health. A sought-after public speaker around the world, Dr. Hans Diehl attended the final session of the first local CHIP program in November 2014. During that visit he said, "I would like to see Enterprise become a template for other small communities in the country."

HOSPITAL TAKING NAMES FOR CHIP PARTICIPATION

Wallowa Memorial Hospital (WMH) is currently taking names of people who are interested in attending classes of the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP). Upcoming available classes start in September 2015 and in spring 2016. To be placed on the list, contact WMH's Sue Womack at 542-426-5301.



Rich Rautenstrauch/Chieftain

During a class meeting of CHIP at Wallowa Memorial Hospital, Dr. Emily Sheahan, right, and Dr. Kenneth Rose present information to program participants.

Highlights from the 2-month, 50-person CHIP classes

- Total cholesterol levels dropped 10% in one class and 8.2% in the other
- With half of all participants starting with high LDL levels, the average LDL loss was 16.2% and 10% for the classes.
- Average weight loss per person in the classes were 7.8 pounds and 7.2 pounds.
- The largest individual weight loss for one person in the class was 28.6 pounds.