

Veterans Day, Nov. 11

The Focus newsletter honors employees of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services who have served in the United States Armed Forces. Take the time this Veterans Day -- Wednesday, Nov. 11 -- to reflect on the sacrifices made by America's veterans to protect freedom throughout the country and the world.

DAIL Employees Share Weight Loss Success Stories

Four Department for Aging and Independent Living staffers have used willpower, healthy living techniques and one another for inspiration to lose weight and feel better. In a recent interview for the Focus, DAIL employees Marnie Mountjoy, Kim Baker, Chris Harbeck and Kristy Gentry shared their journeys to healthier lifestyles and weight loss.

Together, the four women have lost about 260 pounds. All four of them decided to make changes for different reasons.

Mountjoy said after seeing a picture of her and her father at Christmas last year, she wanted to do something to lose weight.

"I knew I needed to do something, I just didn't have the motivation," she said. "That picture made the difference."

So she joined Weight Watchers in January of this year and has since lost more than 40 pounds.

Photographs were also the impetus that preceded Gentry's weight loss story. The long-term care ombudsman for the western Kentucky region said when she saw photos from her wedding day she was extremely dissatisfied with the way she looked.

Gentry also used the Weight Watchers program and lost 118 pounds in one year. She started in 2002 and has kept the weight off now for nearly seven years.

Mountjoy and Gentry were the inspiration that Harbeck needed to begin her own weight loss experience.

"Marnie was losing weight and looking good, and Kristy came in one day with her before and after pictures," she said. "I couldn't believe it. It blew me away. Once I made the decision to start, it felt like everything else fell into place."

Baker said she made lifestyle changes to set a good example for her daughter.

"I knew I needed to make better selections for myself and for her," said Baker, who has lost 60 pounds and kept it off for two years.

While all of the women have had success with the Weight Watchers plan, Gentry said it may not be for everyone. She said she feels the key to weight loss is finding what works for you.

“Just find a plan that’s doable,” she said. “Weight Watchers may not be for everyone. Preplan your meals. Write down what you are eating. You’ll start to realize the areas where you need to cut back.”

For people who may want to lose weight but don’t know where to start or feel frustrated about taking that first step, Harbeck relates.

“Because of back problems I was taking steroid shots,” she said, which caused her to gain weight. “I just kind of resigned myself to the fact that I was going to be big. And I was OK with that.”

But then she saw the changes happening in others around her and knew she had the power to change.

“I would say you can change anything about yourself that you want to change,” she said. “Let go of your excuses. It’s not hard once you get started. It’s amazing.”

All of the women say they used food as a coping mechanism, either as a reward for something good in their life or to cheer them up when they felt bad, even eating as a way to deal with stress.

“You have to find different things to replace those feelings,” said Mountjoy. “I’m drinking more water. Three times a day I go to the cafeteria and fill up my cup – and I’ve met some wonderful people doing it!”

Baker said, “I’ve learned to eat healthier snacks and more filling foods. I take a minute to listen to my body to see if what I’m feeling is actually hunger or something else.”

All four agree that having someone to support your efforts will also make a difference.

“It’s nice to have someone to talk to about it for support and information sharing,” said Mountjoy of her coworkers. “It helps when I feel like I’m getting tired of it to have Chris say ‘today’s a new day.’ ”

After losing weight and keeping it off, both Baker and Gentry said they feel like they really changed their lifestyle instead of dieted. Baker said anyone who is considering trying to make that change should keep one thing in mind.

“Don’t give up. You need to know you deserve it, and you can do it,” she said.

Smokeout is Next Week

The Tobacco Prevention and Cessation program in the Department for Public Health wants to encourage smokers to join the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19. The program recently joined forces with the Legacy Foundation’s Ex campaign to help Kentucky smokers quit. Get

more information online at becomeanex.org. You can also get tobacco cessation support and resources by calling the Kentucky Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT NOW.

Research shows that smokers are most successful in kicking the habit when they have some means of support, such as:

- nicotine replacement products
- counseling
- stop-smoking groups
- telephone smoking cessation hotlines
- prescription medicine to lessen cravings
- guide books
- encouragement and support from friends and family members.

Using two or more of these measures to help you quit works better than using any one of them alone. For example, some people use a prescription medicine along with nicotine replacement. Other people may use as many as three or four of the other measures listed above.

An informational table will be set up outside the CHR Building Cafeteria on Nov. 19, the day of the Great American Smokeout. Throughout the day, employees can stop by the table to get information on quitting. To speak with someone about quitting tobacco, stop by between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Staff Recognized by KHC

Three Cabinet for Health and Family Services employees have been given awards for their work with policies related to the state's homeless population.

Tom Beatty and Heath Dolen, both of the Department for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addiction Services, and Jason Dunn from the Department for Community Based Services, received the awards at the 2009 Kentucky Affordable Housing Conference in Lexington on Oct. 28.

This year was the first for the award that relates to work on the Kentucky Interagency Council on Homelessness (KICH). KICH is a policy group made up of individuals and representatives of several state agencies who have worked to prevent and end homelessness.

KICH has coordinated regional strategies in implementing Kentucky's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, to help identify and prevent homelessness and guide those who are homeless to stable housing.

The Homeless Leadership Awards were presented by Kentucky Housing Corporation to those providing steadfast leadership in implementing and coordinating strategies and solutions to end homelessness in Kentucky.

Living Well: Hibernation Mode

The seasonal changes play a powerful part in our daily lives. They affect our activities, food cravings, clothing choices and often our moods. The shorter daylight hours often leave us in what I refer to as “hibernation mode.” The early darkness leaves us thinking about hunkering down in warm, comfortable clothes with hot tea or hot chocolate. If you are feeling any of the following, you might be moving toward “hibernation mode.”

- Less motivation to be physically active due to fewer daylight hours and cooler temperatures.
- Craving hot, heavier meals.
- Pulling on extra layers of clothes or oversized sweaters that also conveniently disguise your shape.
- Feeling tired and melancholy more often.

To put a halt to hibernation mode, follow my simple guidelines that have been proven to work: eating healthy and maintaining regular exercise.

Here are some alternatives to help fight the “hibernation mode:”

- Walk the mall.
- Sign up for a trial membership at your local gym.
- Investigate indoor pools and local recreation centers.
- Invest in home exercise equipment.

If you are just getting started on a workout plan, discuss your plan with your doctor and get clearance to exercise. Also, be specific. For example, in some cases cold air can trigger chest pain or an asthma attack, so if you have any preexisting conditions, be sure to check with your doctor before exercising. Headed outside? Dress appropriately in layers, starting with a thin layer of a synthetic material that will draw sweat away from your body, a fleece layer to insulate you from the cold and a breathable, water proof shell. In addition to this, always wear a hat and gloves. Reflective clothing may also be a good idea when natural light is poor.

If you work in the Frankfort area, here are some available classes:

Mat Yoga class: Tuesdays through Dec. 22 from noon to 12:45 p.m. in room G-1 at the Capital Plaza Tower. Cost is determined based on number in attendance. Students need to bring their own mat.

CHR Building Yoga class: Mondays at 4:45 p.m. in the cafeteria. Please bring your own mat.

Weight Watchers at Work: CHR Building, fourth floor, Bluegrass Conference Room, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Please e-mail Kris Hayslett at kris.hayslett@ky.gov if you are interested in joining.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Does your speaking style need a shot of confidence and vigor because people don't seem to respond to you? Here are some tips from Tim Jarvis, a writer for Oprah.com, on how to speak so people around you will really listen.

Ask before you offer your opinion. If you are constantly saying, "You should..." then you might be coming across as a know-it-all. People might tune you out if they think you are always being critical. Gently pose your views as advice.

Know your listener's style. If someone you're talking to is always checking a BlackBerry or otherwise making you feel like you are wasting their time, try being more concise and getting to your point more quickly. If it's a serious subject that requires their absolute attention, make an appointment to talk in a conference room to avoid distractions.

Say what you want. Before you start talking, directly tell your listener what you need so they can help direct the conversation. Say so if you need an immediate response, a potential change in the future or just a chance to vent.

Be a better listener. By paying more attention to what others say, you set a good example for active listening. And it's just a good practice.