



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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“Healthy Eating Challenge Produces Positive Results”

Residents of Prairie North Health Region (PNHR) have been eating healthier and are more aware of the importance of healthy eating habits, thanks to a joint project of the Region and Midwest Food Resources (MWFR).

For the past six weeks, nearly 400 people from communities throughout the Region participated in the PNHR/MWFR *Healthy Eating Challenge* where teams followed a schedule to improve their eating habits and healthy food choices, as well as to emphasize the importance of physical activity in achieving a healthy lifestyle.

Sixty-six (66) teams of six people per team from across Prairie North rose to the challenge to eat well and be active: 30 teams were from The Battlefords, 18 were from the health region, 14 were from Meadow Lake, and four were from Lloydminster. Each team earned points according to the priority and criteria for each week of the Challenge:

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| ✓ Week One: | Fruits & Vegetables | 1 point per serving |
| ✓ Week Two: | Breakfast | 5 points for each day you eat breakfast |
| ✓ Week Three: | Family Meals | 5 points for each day you share a meal with someone |
| ✓ Week Four: | Physical Activities | 1 point for 10 minutes of physical activity you do |
| ✓ Week Five: | Beverages | 1 point for each glass of water you consume in a day |
| ✓ Week Six: | Maintain Change | 10 points to set three goals |

“At the end of the first week, over 14,000 servings of fruit and vegetables were consumed by participants,” said Debbie Bonsan, Executive Director with Midwest Food Resources. Serving sizes are according to the Canada Food Guide.

Bonsan explained that the six week challenge has just finished. “The feedback we’ve received from participants has been positive. Not only are participants eating more vegetables and fruit, their families are too. People have been very excited about the Challenge. They are talking about healthy behaviours and trying to eat healthier, instead of talking about the latest diet and their weight,” Bonsan stated.

Jennifer Miller, Public Health Nutritionist with Prairie North Health Region, said, “It takes time for people to adopt healthy habits. Participants in the Healthy Eating Challenge are now selecting healthy foods more often and are having fun while they’re developing these healthy habits.”

Miller noted that according to the 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey, 60 per cent of people in PNHR eat fewer than five servings of vegetables and fruit per day. In general, Canadians do not eat enough vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk products. “Knowing which foods are most nutritious isn’t enough to help people make healthy food choices,” said

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Miller. "One of our goals with the Healthy Eating Challenge was to spur participants to action in making and following through with healthy food choices and increased activity."

The idea for the Healthy Food Challenge came from the MWFR Meadow Lake Local Advisory Committee which includes representation from PNHR. The Advisory Committee was working to find a way for the public to become more aware of Midwest Food Resources and promote its programs. Midwest Food Resources is a not-for-profit community-based and supported organization working in partnership with other groups and individuals to bring healthy food to all. MWFR and PNHR are committed to making healthy foods accessible to residents of the region.

Midwest is looking to expand its local advisory committees to each area in the region. If you would be interested in joining your local committee, please contact Debbie Bonsan at (306) 845-3903 or at debbie.mwfp@sasktel.net

On behalf of their organizations, Bonsan and Miller thank every one who participated in the Challenge. They concur, "It was a successful endeavour and one that will be running again next year."

Appreciation is also expressed to the donors of prizes that were awarded each week to various participants in the Challenge. The prizes were water bottles, stress balls, Frisbees, and fitness passes. The prizes were generously donated by Prairie North Health Region, Midwest Food Resources, City of North Battleford Parks and Recreation, and Frontier Mall North Battleford.

To further support programs in communities, Midwest Food Resources is selling cookbooks "*Celebrating 10 years of Collective Cooking*". The cookbooks are \$10 each. If you are interested in purchasing a cookbook for yourself or giving one as a gift, please contact one of the Midwest Food Resource offices:

Lloydminster (306) 825-2606
Meadow Lake (306) 236-3966

Battlefords (306) 446-2684
Turtleford (306) 845-3903

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MEDIA:

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