On the path to success

The end of weekly core sessions is rapidly approaching for the fifty-one participants in our four Individuals and Communities Acting Now to Prevent Diabetes® (ICPD) classes. Many attendees have said, “Sixteen weeks sounded like a long time, but now it’s going too fast!”

And with topics like these, who can blame them?

- Move Those Muscles—Building up to your physical activity goal slowly.
- Tip the Calorie Balance—Reducing fat and calories AND increasing physical activity.
- Take Charge of What’s Around You—Building positive lifestyle cues into your daily routine.
- Talk Back to Negative Thoughts—Countering self-defeating thoughts with positive ones.

Earlier sessions have addressed healthy eating and active living, and later sessions are delving into the behavioral component that is so important to making lasting lifestyle changes.

To learn more about I CAN Prevent Diabetes in Minnesota, see www.icanpreventdiabetes.org/

At the midway point

Our four groups in Western Minnesota passed the halfway point of their sixteen weekly core sessions in April. Here’s what the group members were doing and saying:

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS ARE DOING

- **Tracking their food:** Seventy-three percent of the Dawson group turned in completed food trackers.
- **Moving their bodies:** The Ortonville group completed 1845 minutes of physical activity in a week.
- **Attending classes:** The Dawson group’s attendance was 93%.
- **Losing weight:** The Frazee group lost 61 pounds, 3.7% of their cumulative weight

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING

- “There is just something about being in this room with other people going through the same thing.”
- “I signed up to take a class to prevent diabetes. Little did I know that this class would change the way I think about food.”
- “Keeping track of fat, calories and activity levels keeps me on track, especially knowing someone is going to be reading my journals!”
- “I even counted out 28 M&Ms today where before I would have dumped a large pile on a napkin.”
A temperature check

“What do you like about this class?” Mary Marczak, Evaluation and Research Specialist at Extension, kicked off focus groups in Western Minnesota with this question.

One of the goals of the I CAN Prevent Diabetes pilot project is to determine and pilot the preferences of participants regarding distance learning methods for this course.

Despite the best efforts of Minnesota’s weather to stop her, Marczak visited each site this spring and held an hour-long focus group with available participants.

Focus Group Questions

Marczak posed number of questions to participants, including the following:

- What kind of technologies are available for distance learning in your community?
- What is your comfort level with learning through technology?
- What experiences have you had with other distance learning opportunities?
- What can we do to help you overcome barriers to distance learning?
- What do you think about adding distance learning to this course?

Preliminary results are quite different from what the research team expected. We will share more in the next newsletter.

To learn more about the National Diabetes Prevention Program, see http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/about.htm

Scanning the environment

What is the quality of technology infrastructure in Western Minnesota? What is the cost and availability of technology, and possible community technology use issues for, residents in our project area?

In other words, what might be the assets and barriers to offering distance education as part of our project?

A key component to piloting distance learning methods is to gauge the existing distance learning infrastructure in the communities that we’re involved with. With this goal in mind, Extension Educators interviewed key community informants to determine possible next steps to programming.

Early results indicate that rural counties in Western Minnesota are technologically ‘well-connected’. In most situations, access is improving as cost decreases. Libraries offer technology help and free access. The innovative Computer Commuter Program in Lac qui Parle County (pictured above), whose goal is to increase digital literacy among both low income and senior populations, provides free technology help and access to six small towns each week. Western Minnesota is connected!

To learn more about distance learning in the ICPD Western Minnesota pilot project, contact Houa Vue Her at vuex0067@umn.edu.
From the field

One participant took the time to write a letter about how the I CAN Prevent Diabetes class has made a difference in her life:

I wanted to let you know how beneficial the program... has been for me. With 5 weeks left of this 16-week program, I have already met my 7% weight loss goal. Six months ago, I had a fasting glucose level of 132. As of last week, my blood glucose level (non-fasting) was 103, and my A1C value is at a normal reading of 5.1. My doctor is extremely pleased with my progress.

I feel this class has helped me to obtain my goals in a step-by-step process that will lead to a lifestyle change that will enable me to continue this process even after the class ends. Having a group of assorted personalities with different health/life experiences and a good leader gives me a lot of new ideas and different perspectives...

Now... on to my next 7% goal!

Spotlight on… Lynn Lokken

Four Community Nutrition Educators partnered with local agencies to deliver the ICPD program. This month, we feature Lynn Lokken, who is teaching in Dawson.

Which lesson has been the most fun to teach?
I enjoyed the first lesson when we talked about why the group was at risk for Type 2 Diabetes. People were very honest about why they felt they needed this program and what they wanted to achieve.

How do you like to be physically active?
My favorite is walking outside. In winter, I use the treadmill. I also do yoga and strength training using a Wii Fit personalized routine. In addition, I have a large yard that keeps me active.

What would you say to people thinking about making lifestyle changes?
It is so important and it isn’t painful. The ICPD program takes you slowly through the process and provides the support you need. It took years to establish your current habits and it will take time to make new habits. You won’t regret it.

To find out if there is a ICPD program near you, visit www.icanpreventdiabetes.org/groups.html