

Inspired by Forks Over Knives, Dublin, Ohio Employees Adopt Plant-Based Diet with Success

By Janice Stanger, PhD
March 12 2013

The City of Dublin, Ohio is serious about health. City leaders have implemented programs to educate both its 40,000 residents and 370 employees on the benefits of plant-based eating. The community-based program, Healthy Dublin, has featured speakers, including Caldwell Esselstyn, Jr., M.D., Julieanna Hever, R.D., and Chef AJ to educate citizens about a whole-food, plant-based diet. But it was a screening of *Forks Over Knives* that was instrumental in taking the wellness program for city employees to an advanced level.

The city already had deployed a substantial wellness program, which features one-on-one counseling for exercise and stress management, financial incentives to lower disease risk factors, and several fitness programs. Yet the city still saw its health care costs climbing faster than inflation and was willing to try something new. After receiving requests from employees who had seen *Forks Over Knives*, the city's management and human resources department championed a plant-based nutrition education program just for employees. Soon the city contracted with The Wellness Forum, based in nearby Columbus, to teach such a program. The classes were taught by The Wellness Forum's executive director, Pam Popper, N.D., who was featured in *Forks Over Knives*.

The program was voluntary, but all the employees attended meetings to learn about it. Twenty-nine workers signed up for the first set of classes. For eight weeks, the enrollees heard lectures, discussed what they were learning, saw recipes being prepared, and – very importantly – sampled excellent, [plant-based food](#).

The city measured several risk factors of the enrollees before the program began and then again eight weeks later when it concluded. While usual wellness programs can take years to achieve modest results, the plant-based worksite program achieved substantial health improvements in only eight weeks. Here were some of the results:

- The percentage of hypertensive participants fell from 20% to 3.7%

- The percentage of those with high triglycerides plummeted from 40% to 11%
- The percentage of those with elevated glucose decreased from 28% to 18.5%
- The average weight loss was 10.5 pounds
- Medication use decreased, with many of the participants planning to work with their doctors to reduce or get off drugs

Employees loved their new diets and many of them even encouraged their colleagues to sign up for the next series of classes. Enrollees gave kudos to the tasty food, the knowledge they gained, and the caring attitude they experienced. Here's a sampling of what they had to say:

- "Everything I've learned in the program has worked. I'm having more fun with it now than anything. I like that I can eat a lot of food and get full on the Program's diet. I don't have to write things down."
- "I definitely feel a lot better. I don't want to put nasty junk that makes me feel bad into my body. I want to be as healthy as possible for as long as possible."
- "Changing diet is a piece of cake compared to quitting cigarettes. After the first class, I saw myself as a plant-based eater."

The positive results pleased the City of Dublin, which is planning to continue the program so more employees can find improved health. Further, the city has enthusiastically shared the idea of worksite plant-based

(continued)

Inspired by Forks Over Knives, Dublin, Ohio Employees Adopt Plant-Based Diet with Success

By Janice Stanger, PhD
March 12 2013

programs with the larger community. As health care costs consume one out of every six dollars of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product, the City of Dublin is showing governments *and* businesses how an innovative plant-based nutrition program can make people healthier and improve our economy.

Watch this video about Dublin's former director of Human Resources, Dave Harding, and his transformation on a whole-food, plant-based diet: