**Introduction and Program Description**

The Heart of New Ulm Project (HONU) is a 10-year demonstration project aimed at reducing myocardial infarctions (MI) and modifiable heart disease risk factors in New Ulm, Minnesota. For more information, visit [www.heartsbeatback.org](http://www.heartsbeatback.org).

In 2009, free heart health screenings were offered to all adult residents and held at worksites, the medical center, churches and other community venues. Participants completed a questionnaire and biometric measures (i.e., blood pressure, height, weight, waist circumference, fasting blood draw).

The 2009 screening results found that 73% of New Ulm’s residents were either overweight or obese. These results prompted HONU to start a Community Health Challenge (CHC) program focused on helping residents lose weight.

Within the CHC, there are many components, including smaller challenges. One of the challenges in 2011 included Holiday Trimmings, an eight-week program focused on weight maintenance during the fall/winter holiday season. Registration was done in person at worksites, community settings, or online through the project’s website.

Participants received weekly e-blasts with tips and resources for weight maintenance, or a packet of materials with the same information if they opted for non-electronic communication. For worksite participants, the program included weigh-in sessions.

**Methods**

All participants were required to complete a pre-program survey at enrollment. Community members self-reported their pre- and post-weight. Worksites were offered the option of having a HONU staff member onsite to conduct the pre- and post-weigh-in. Height for all participants was self-reported.

A total of 70 worksites were invited to participate: 12 participated in the program, 11 of those chose to have a HONU staff member conduct the onsite weigh-in (pre- and post-program).

Participants using the online materials were asked to do the surveys via Survey Monkey. Those not using the online materials filled out the pre-survey in person during registration and were mailed hard copies of the post-survey.

Analysis was conducted to compare people completing the program (indicated by post-survey) with those who did not (pre-survey). Among those who completed survey data, comparisons were done to examine changes in behavior with those who lost weight and those who did not. Analysis used frequencies and chi-square to examine these data.

**Results**

**Enrollment:** 539 participants registered. Of these, 509 completed the pre-program survey. Participants were predominantly female (87%), and 68.8% were overweight or obese.

**Retention:** Participants who continued with the eight-week program (279 or 55% of enrollees) did not differ from those who dropped out (230 or 45% providing only a pre-program survey) based on weight, gender, fruit and vegetable consumption, or alcohol use. Those who completed the program had a higher percentage (75%) of sufficient exercise levels.

**Weight outcomes:** 70.8% either maintained (19.1%) or lost weight (51.7%). Weight outcomes were compared for those who enrolled through their worksite (n=89) and general community enrollees (n=172). Those enrolled through their worksite were more likely to lose weight (61% vs. 47%).

**Strategies contributing to weight loss included:** Not skipping meals before a party, portion control, not standing near a food table at a party, avoiding appetizers at holiday parties and self-weighing regularly. Those who lost weight had a significantly larger increase in daily fruit and vegetable consumption than those who maintained or gained weight.

**Compared to those who maintained weight, those who lost weight during the program were more likely to have been overweight (BMI 1.5 points higher) and have lower levels of healthy behaviors at baseline.**

**Conclusions**

While the program had low worksite enrollment, it retained 55% of the enrollees. The program was successful for the majority of enrollees who completed the program. Those enrolled at worksites exhibited more weight loss than those enrolling from the general community, indicating the program may be impacted by the weigh-in sessions and the social context of the worksites.

**Weight management strategies that seemed most associated with weight loss focused on fruit and vegetable intake, eating behaviors and weight monitoring.**

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