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PASSING THE TEST

Local leaders manage monthlong challenge to live healthier lives

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FOR OLYMPIC PENINSULA HEALTHY
COMMUNITY COALITION

For most of us, making even one lifestyle change can be difficult to weave into our busy lives. But this past July, 12 community leaders took on a challenge to make four major lifestyle changes each day for the entire month.

The Clallam County Healthy Leaders 5210 Challenge was issued to local leaders by Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition, a regional nonprofit working to decrease chronic disease in our communities.

- The 5210 Challenge included:
- Striving for at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruits per day
 - Getting 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
 - Getting in 1 hour of physical activity
 - Drinking 0 sugar-sweetened beverages.

The 5210 program is in 34 states across the country and reflects the four most important steps that research shows can positively impact our health, prevent chronic disease and decrease excess body weight.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The group included Rebekah Miller



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Those who took part in the Olympic Peninsula Health Care Coalition's 2018 Healthy Leaders 5210 Challenge were, from left, Rebekah Miller, Andra Smith, Eric Lewis, Cindy Kelly, Thom Hightower, Jim Stoffer, Nicole Brewer, Mark Ozias, Patty Lebowitz, Tom Sanford and Mary Budke. Not pictured is Jessica Hernandez.

from Peninsula Behavioral Health; Eric Lewis and Thom Hightower from Olympic Medical Center; Clallam County Commissioner Mark Ozias; Nicole Brewer from Parenting Matters; Tom Sanford from North Olympic Land Trust; Andra Smith from Sequim Food Bank; Mary Budke from the Boys & Girls Club of the Olympic Peninsula; Patty Lebowitz from Sequim Free Clinic and Sequim Food Bank; Jessica Hernandez from the Port Angeles Food Bank; Jim Stoffer from the Sequim School Board; and Cindy Kelly from the Port Angeles School Board.

The group met at the end of June to learn the ground rules and answer questions before beginning the monthlong challenge.

Each leader was given a chart to keep track of their progress on each of the four

behaviors and were told the goal was not necessarily weight loss but an opportunity to live healthier lifestyles.

Many of the "challengers" were eager to learn more about how insidious sugar is in beverages, and some were glum to hear they'd go the next month without their favorite fancy coffee beverages.

They learned tips and tricks to stay active, monitor their screen time and replace it with other activities, plus ideas on how to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diets.

A month later, on a warm evening near the end of July, the group met again to share the challenges and successes they'd faced over the past month.

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As a whole, the group had made some remarkable changes they were able to carry through the month, especially including an increased awareness of how easy it had become to fall into behavior "ruts" prior to starting the challenge.

In addition, many of the leaders challenged their colleagues, family and friends to accompany them on their challenge journey, helping to build support systems and accountability.

Though weight loss was not the primary goal of the challenge, several leaders noticed their pants become a bit roomier.

Thom Hightower, a hospital commissioner at Olympic Medical Center, has been a vegan for the past several years in response to some health concerns, so he already eats more than the five vegetables and fruits a day.

But he found that when he increased his three-day-per-week walking habit to six days per week, he lost five pounds over the course of the month.

Nicole Brewer, executive director at Parenting Matters, was surprised by how much time she spent on screens — tablets, phones, computers and television — outside of her work day.

"I even made myself a little check box every day so I would only do five-minute

increments, jumping on my phone just to check things, and found it was far too easy to quickly go over my allotted time," she said.

Eric Lewis, CEO at Olympic Medical Center, and **Mark Ozias**, Clallam County commissioner, both spent part of the month traveling on vacation and found it very difficult to eat plenty of vegetables and fruits while attending family functions or dining in restaurants.

Lewis found he had to order an extra side of vegetables while dining out to accompany his meal.

Ozias sought out any and all fresh produce that was offered and doubled up on it.

Jim Stoffer, of the Sequim School Board, had several lengthy road trips over the month and found he had to forgo his usual habit of juice and doughnuts while he traveled.

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— Nicole Brewer, executive director at Parenting Matters, on decreasing her screen time

Stoffer approached the challenge with great enthusiasm and was diligent in his choices over the month. He pre-packed snacks of fruit and vegetables in his car, loaded up with water and stopped at rest stops along the way to get in his walks.

He also works with many youths in Sequim and switched out their typical high-sugar drinks and snacks for healthier options, thus spreading the challenge to the next generation.

It's not always easy to incorporate these changes into the work day, but **Tom Sanford**, executive director at North Olympic Land Trust, brought his staff outside for "walking meetings" and switched up the typical break room snacks with healthier options for the employees.

All of the leaders shared the challenge with their work sites and began to identify potential policy changes that could

help make the healthier choice the easier choice for their staff and colleagues.

Policy changes help turn short-term lifestyle changes into healthier ways of living over the long term.

READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?

Are you ready to take the 5210 Challenge?

Even if you don't go for all four steps, adopting one or two into your life can be the first step in becoming healthier for the long run.

Perhaps you decide to stop buying sodas and switch to water, or add a quick walk in between appointments, or put on your headphones and head out around the block during your next phone call, or add one new vegetable or fruit to your meals for the week.

That first step can snowball into bigger changes for your health.

These leaders were able to find ways to live healthier over a month's time, even with their incredibly busy schedules.

Join them in taking the 5210 Challenge!

Dr. Monica Dixon is a psychologist and registered dietitian and serves as the president of the Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition, a regional nonprofit working to decrease chronic disease on the Olympic Peninsula.

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