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Local Walk Kansas participants watch a demonstration by Seward County K-State Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Kathy Bloom Monday evening at a celebration for the end of the event in the Ag Building. Everyone who participated in Walk Kansas got an avocado and a mango, and in her demonstration, Bloom showed them how to prepare a mango. Prizes were later given out, including a \$100 gift certificate from Brown's Shoe Fit. Courtesy photo

- Provided by Seward County K-State Research and Extension Walk Kansas 2013 is over, and the participants gathered at the Seward County Ag Building Monday to celebrate.

A project of the K-State Research and Extension, Seward County had 27 teams with 162 people participate in the eight-week program. Fifteen of those teams reached their chosen goal.

The team-based program is designed to help participants lead a healthier life by being more active, making better nutrition choices, and learning positive ways to deal with stress.

The program also challenges the participants to set personal goals that go beyond the team minimum.

Teams are sometimes made up of co-workers, others just good friends, and at least one team was made up of all members of the same family. Kelly Kirk, a local fireman, has participated several years, and this year his team members were all members of his family.

They reached their goal of walking across Kansas and back in less than seven weeks, but continued on through the eighth week with plans to continue this exercise program as part of their lifestyle.

Each team of six chose one of three different challenges to compete in.

Challenge No. 1 is for the team to walk across the state of Kansas which is 423 miles. For the team to reach its goal, each team member needs to do two and one half hours of physical activity per week for 8 weeks.

Challenge No. 2 is for the team to walk across the state and back, a total of 846 miles. Each team member needs at least 5 hours of activity per week for their team to reach its goal.

Challenge No. 3 is for the team to walk around the state which is 1,200 miles. To reach their team's goal each team members must log six hours of activity per week.

Seward County had seven teams, or 42 people, that participated in Challenge No. 1 with all but two reaching their goal of 423 miles. The other two teams were just short by 25 and 64 miles of their goal, which is outstanding.

There were 12 teams, or 72 people, that participated in Challenge No. 2, with five teams reaching their goal. Three of those actually walked across and back and then back across again.

There were seven teams that participated in Challenge No. 3 with five of them walking more than 1,200 miles around the state. One team walked the distance of around the state twice.

In addition to the exercise, all participants are encouraged to drink water in place of sugary beverages and to keep track of the number of cups of fruits and vegetables they eat each week.

Walking is not the only physical activity that counts. Any time a participant completes a moderate or vigorous activities for ten or more consecutive minutes, it can count towards their goal.

Walk Kansas is a statewide health initiative presented by the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service. Every county in Kansas participates in the program.

With only 48 percent of the people living in Kansas meet the minimum goal for physical activity and just 19 percent of Kansans eat enough fruits and vegetables daily.

Healthy lifestyle choices such as being physically active, eating more healthfully, maintaining a recommended weight, and managing stress more effectively can delay or prevent chronic disease.

For more information about Walk Kansas and other community projects, call 624-5604 or stop by the Extension office at 1081 Stadium Road.

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