

Moccasins challenge gives group feet of fire

By Terri Harber
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About 50 Warm Springs tribal members worked up a sweat this fall to participate in a health concept targeting Native Americans.

"Moccasins Across the USA" was held during October and November. Participants spent at least 30 minutes a day—every day—exercising during those two months. The amount of time huffing and puffing was equivalent to trekking across the United States by foot, hence the name of the event.

Recognized for their efforts were three employees of the Tribal Council Office, who worked out enough to reach Hollywood, Florida if they actually had put on moccasins and walked across the continent.

Rena Suppah, Joelden Surface and Naomi Brisbois were intrigued by KYSO radio personalities bantering about the exercise program over the air one day. They heard one challenge another to try to fulfill the Moccasins challenge.

Then a rivalry between the radio employees and council employees ensued—with occasional colorful commentary over the radio.

Suppah started out by walking to work every day, then



Rena Suppah, Joelden Surface and Naomi Brisbois

added exercise stints at the Community Center a couple days a week. And by the time the two months were up, Brisbois had completed several hikes over Camelback Mountain.

Their bosses, the Tribal Council, recognized their efforts with a proclamation in October as a way to fire them up. Surface, who'd also began walking to work daily, decided to make the moment a little more fun by adding a little something to the proclamation: A big yellow emoticon sticking out its tongue, a poke at KYSO employees who hadn't signed up yet.

The radio employees ultimately didn't complete the pro-

gram.

"I hadn't worked out in a year," Surface said. "The contest got me going again."

Participants received a T-shirt, water bottle and gloves—items to help them keep up their exercise regimens throughout the year.

The Moccasins idea is part of the tribe's Diabetes Prevention Program. Across the U.S., 34 tribes offer programs and activi-

ties that aim to help Native Americans not develop diabetes, said Montell Elliott, recruitment coordinator.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives are more than twice as likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites, according to the Indian Health Service. They estimate that 30 percent of these people have prediabetes and have seen a 68 percent increase in youth cases from 1994 to 2004.

Complications that can occur with diabetes include heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, blindness and kidney disease.

The tribe's program offers instruction to members with prediabetes. The next class will begin Feb. 23. Members can also come down to the office, on Warm Springs Street, across from the Presbyterian Church, for information and to have their blood checked during business hours.

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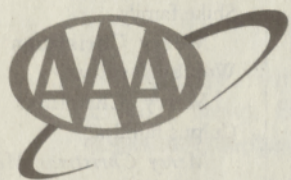
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