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For Immediate Release

“Biggest Losers” Win Many Rewards In Weight Loss Program at The Boston Home

Local Resident Sheds Pounds, Adds Cash

Dorchester, MA—Rolanda Barros of Newton is a big loser.

Actually, she was so successful in losing weight that she turned out to be a big *winner* in a novel weight loss contest recently held at The Boston Home in Dorchester, a long-term care facility that serves adults with multiple sclerosis and other progressive neurological diseases. Rolanda, an activities assistant and certified nursing assistant at TBH, joined 25 fellow employees who completed a 12-week program that helped everyone reach their goals—and also receive financial rewards.

Rolanda received \$200 for shedding 28 pounds, and her family chipped in another \$1,000 for her to buy new clothes. But more importantly, she feels healthier and more energized than ever. Rolanda, like most of the other participants, reports that previous attempts to lose weight weren't nearly as successful.

“I tried so hard to lose weight so many times before. The difference here was the encouragement of everyone involved,” she says.

The program was the idea of Kerry Donohue, TBH Director of Activities.

“Excessive weight is a serious health issue that overweight people typically struggle with,” says Kathylene Pavidis, an RN and staff development coordinator at TBH. “But we came up with a fun solution that really works.”

“All the program participants were winners in this competition,” says Donohue, “and almost all of them have committed to an ongoing change of their lifestyle.”

“Biggest Losers” consists of daily walks, exercise classes, diet workshops, and a weekly group weigh-in, which promotes accountability. Everyone eats together, and everyone supports each other.

Even those not participating in the contest get involved, including TBH residents, who routinely check poster boards depicting staff's progress and before-and-after photos. Residents also attended an emotional awards ceremony following the 12 weeks.

Also supporting the program was Tufts Health Plan, which donated pedometers to record participants' walking distances.

“This program has been a great morale booster and a lot of fun,” says Pavidis. “But most of all, it’s very gratifying to see such encouraging results in a relatively short time.”

To begin the program, all participants had their Body Mass Index (BMI) checked. The weight of staff members at TBH mirrors that of the overall population, says Pavidis, reflecting a problem of dramatic proportions.

“We’re a health facility after all,” says Pavidis, “and it’s important that we set an example and show that excessive weight is a critical—and *preventable*—condition. People just need the proper motivation...and cash incentives can be a big push.” To support the program, each participating employee contributes \$5 per week. Awards to the top three winners come from the collection.

According to Donohue, the Biggest Losers program at TBH is now in its second phase—with Rolanda back for more—and it will continue to grow. Future plans call for a focus on blood pressure monitoring and smoke cessation/related weight control.

“I salute all of our present and future ‘losers,’” says Marva Serotkin, TBH president and CEO, “and we look forward to building on this innovative initiative. We are invested in the health of our employees, and we have seen that there is a correlation between physical well-being and performance.”

Founded in 1881, The Boston Home is a 96-bed, not-for-profit, long-term-care facility that serves adults with multiple sclerosis and other progressive neurological diseases. Now celebrating its 125th anniversary and offering an outpatient rehabilitation program, TBH is the only facility of its kind in New England and one of a few in the United States. It has earned a national reputation for providing progressive, long-term care. For more information, visit www.thebostonhome.org.

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