



in the news



Preferred Health Care Services staff step it up for symbolic walk across Canada

Workplace wellness team's pedometer challenge generates health awareness

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By Lisa Bailey

With great enthusiasm and team spirit, Preferred Health Care Services staff members are walking across Canada.

“The anticipation, the excitement, the team spirit has been totally awesome.”

— Debra Sayewich, director of marketing and chair of the workplace wellness team, Preferred Health Care Services

In fact, they've surpassed this goal by wholeheartedly taking up a pedometer challenge issued by Preferred Health Care Services' workplace wellness team.

“The anticipation, the excitement, the team spirit has been totally awesome,” says Debra Sayewich, Preferred Health Care Services director of marketing and chair of the

workplace wellness team.

The team, spearheaded at Preferred's Richmond Hill head office and involved in a pilot program with York Region Public Health, devised the challenge

to capture the spirit sparked by the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

York Region Public Health supplied pedometers for participants

to count their steps for a two-week period. A record is kept on log sheets.

Launched March 8, the progress of participants is being tracked on a map of Canada.

With less than a week to go before all remaining walkers have to turn in their pedometers and log sheets, Sayewich reports that the official tally of steps taken

stands at 8,682,131.

The goal is 9,008,750 steps, which equals a walk from St. John's to Victoria.

With the last tally taken two weeks ago on May 10, Sayewich says “we are (now) well beyond” the nine-million mark and probably over 10 million steps.

This total would mean that the coast-to-coast walk from east to west is complete and “we're now heading back into the province of Alberta.”

Sayewich is not surprised by the response, noting “there's great team spirit” amongst Preferred Health Care Services staff.

The roughly 100 participants include front-line staff, such as personal support workers and companions, as well as client-care specialists and the education team.

Their excitement for the task has been infectious, with the

Leisureworld team behind Project Thomas signing on.

While the event has been fun and enhanced already strong staff camaraderie, Sayewich says it's also raised the level of health consciousness.

For example, participants purposely park vehicles further away and modify other behaviours in order to walk more.

“It has made some differences with how people are looking at exercise, taking care of their body a little bit better,” she says, noting health awareness falls in line with the workplace wellness team's efforts.

Next month, walkers will be recognized in a few categories at Preferred Health Care Services' annual general meeting.

Plans are to make the challenge an annual event, with Sayewich vowing the 2011 version “will be even better.”