

'Health hike' kicks off new wellness program

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BERNARDS TWP. – An innovative weight loss program that's part of Mayor Scott Spitzer's Wellness Campaign got under way with a "health hike" on Saturday, June 19, at Dunham Park off Liberty Corner Road.

The program, billed as the "100 Days, 100 Ways Toxic Waistline Competition," will offer weekly exercise activities for a 100-day period through mid-September.

Saturday's health hike went very well, Spitzer said Monday.

"Participants commented that they appreciated the organized activity and it was the first time that many of them became familiar with Dunham Park," he said. "These health hikes are not only good exercise, but they introduce our residents to our first-class recreational resources."

Additional health hikes will be scheduled in the future.

The competition, similar to the television program, "The Biggest Loser," will provide educational exercise incentives to help adults and kids lose weight in the most healthy manner possible.

The participant with the highest weight loss percentage will receive \$500.

At a Township Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 15, Spitzer said about 140 registrants have joined the program to date. The participants include residents as well as 18 township employees, five school district workers and three Somerset Hills YMCA employees.

Children are also getting involved. Ten of the registrants are between the ages of 11 and 17, Spitzer noted.

"A group of registrants with that diversity is significant," the mayor said. "It's truly a community competition, and we're very pleased by that significant response."

The township is offering the program through a partnership with the township Health Department, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Somerset Hills YMCA, and the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute.

Funding for the venture is being provided through a grant from the National Business Coalition for Health of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute in Trenton.

The township is the only municipality in New Jersey to receive the grant.