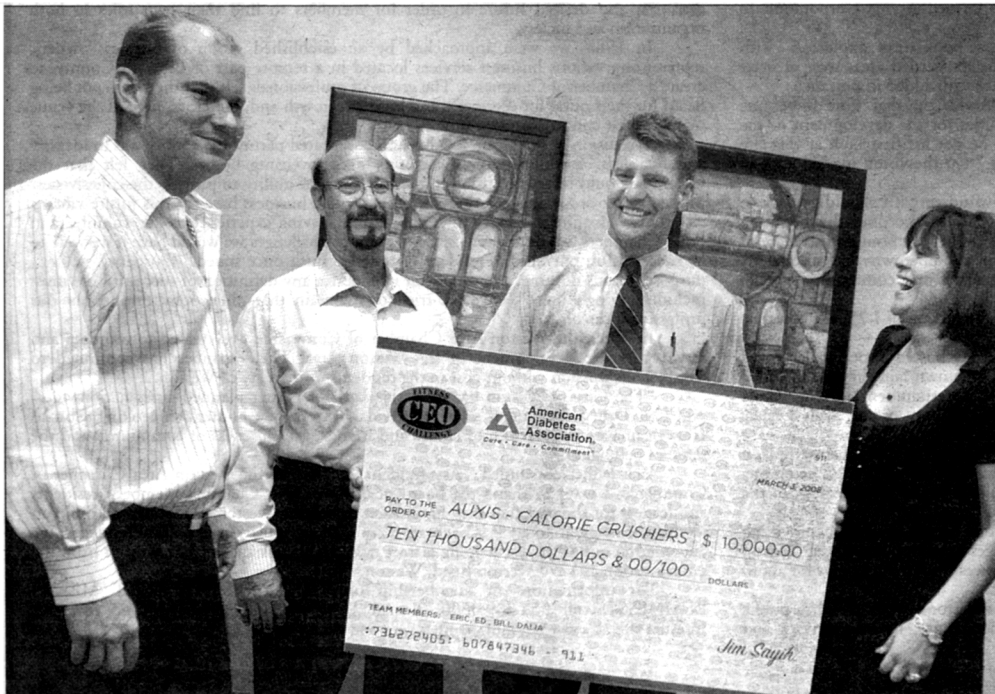


BUSINESS NEWS

CEO FITNESS CHALLENGE



PHOTOS BY EILEEN SOLER/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

BIG BUCKS: Bill Rauch, left, Hank Grant, Ed Marciniak and Dalia Quiñones-Zayas, employees of Auxis, get a kick out of their winning check. At right, Jacki Haack of the American Diabetes Association accepts a check from CEO Fitness Challenge founder Jim Sayih.

Losers win big in healthy competition

■ Office executives got out from behind their desks to compete in a tri-county fitness challenge.

BY EILEEN SOLER
Special to The Miami Herald

Corporate workers virtually strapped to their desks day in and day out spent eight weeks dropping pounds, gaining muscle and shaping up. "I feel super," said Hank Grant, 60, a recruiting officer at Auxis, a management and technology consulting firm in Plantation.

Grant was one of five on the office team, Calorie Crunchers, named the biggest losers and winners of the CEO Fitness Challenge.

The competition, throughout February and March, featured 21 teams of soft-bodied Broward, Miami-Dade and

Palm Beach County executives geared up to get brawny. Jim Sayih, founder of the the International Police and Firefighter 911 Fitness Challenge and Adventure Boot Camp for Women, said the teams together lost 1,452 pounds of fat and gained 609.9 pounds of muscle.

Calorie Crunchers, also made up of risk management manager Ed Marciniak, 43; client services representative Eric Liebross, 46; recruiter Bill Rauch, 35; and marketing director Dalia Quiñones-Zayas, 45, beat the competition with an improvement score of 39 percent body fat loss and muscle gain.

Sayih, of Pembroke Pines, awarded the team trips to Las Vegas and \$10,000 to divide evenly. He also donated \$5,000 from team registration fees to the American Diabetes

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But Marciniak, who lost 45 percent of his body fat, said the group won more than prizes.

"We're a much livelier office. And we're all happier and healthier," he said.

Grant, who lost 10 pounds and two pants sizes, said he changed the way he ate after the first day when he compared a list of healthy foods and bad foods with what he ate at home.

"It was like Jim made the 'bad food' list by looking in my kitchen," Grant said.

Rauch, the youngest and fittest from the start, lost five pounds of fat and gained 15 pounds of muscle to become "the strongest ever in my

life."

Quiñones-Zayas went down two dress sizes and regained the energy she had as a younger mother. Instead of arriving home drained after a long day at work, she said she gets home eager to help with homework and join in family activities.

"The day never ends for a mom, but now I don't just have more energy," she said. "I am focused to give my family 100 percent of my attention."

Participants — 135 in all — were weighed in and out by certified trainers. Meanwhile, Sayih provided team leaders with weekly nutrition, motivation and exercise program training, which they took

back to their offices and shared.

According to Sayih's website, in an average American corporate office with 100 employees, 60 percent sit all day at computers or telephones, 50 percent are stressed constantly at moderate levels, 35 percent are overweight, 27 percent have cardiovascular disease and 25 percent have high cholesterol.

Grant joked that camaraderie, friendly policing and a little bit of guilt led to the team's win. "And it all inspired lifestyle changes for the better," he said.

The next CEO Fitness Challenge begins June 16. Registration deadline is June 1. For information, visit www.ceofitnesschallenge.com, or e-mail jim@fitnesscommitmentinstitute.org.