



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Scale Back Alabama celebrates healthful weight loss; announces \$1,000 winners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Today, hundreds of Alabamians gathered in Montgomery to celebrate their eight-week long efforts to get healthy and lose weight. They represented the top 100 teams in a statewide weight-loss competition called Scale Back Alabama that featured 2003 American Idol Ruben Studdard as its spokesperson.

Sponsored by Alabama's hospitals, the Alabama Department of Public Health and Barber Dairies, the contest encouraged teams of three to five people to lose weight and exercise, and it provided an incentive of a \$1,000 per person grand prize for members of the team having the highest percentage weight loss.

More than 5,000 teams participated in the contest, representing 46 of the state's 67 counties. In the end, 2,100 teams participated in the final weigh in, losing a grand total of 78,000 pounds or about 9,800 pounds per week.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "The Scale Back Alabama program has drawn our attention to the fact that at least two-thirds of Alabamians are overweight or obese, and we must take action to address this growing problem. Weight issues today will drive up premature death rates for the decades to come."

Alabama adults rank as second most obese in the nation, and extra weight can be a factor in increasing the risk of heart disease, diabetes and other life-altering conditions.

"We were overwhelmed with the number of teams participating and the tremendous feedback we're received," said Mike Horsley, president of the Alabama Hospital Association. "Many contestants have told us this has been a life-changing event and that they are dedicated to continuing the course toward a healthier lifestyle. It's just what we had envisioned."

After the campaign was announced on Jan. 4, teams formed and stepped on the scales at one of the official weigh-in sites located at 61 hospitals and many county health departments. Each

team chose its name; often with clever titles such as “Ben and the Beefcakes,” “Chubby Chicks,” “Faithfully Fit,” “Phat Pharmers” and “The Shrinking Ladies.”

Scale Back classes were offered weekly to provide beneficial information and support. The weekly on demand webcasts dealt with topics including the following:

- calorie awareness and portion control
- limiting fat by using seasonings
- physical activity and hydration
- fast supper meals
- emotional influences
- setbacks
- lifestyles for maintenance

These classes can be viewed at www.adph.org/videocommunications. A toolkit for businesses provided information and assistance as well.

“We asked participants to set a behavior goal, a food goal such as drinking skim milk or watching portion sizes, and a realistic physical activity goal that works for them,” said Miriam Gaines, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division, Alabama Department of Public Health “We want each person to set a realistic goal of getting healthier.”

Some participants took up walking as individuals or in groups, began taking the stairs instead of the elevator, and modified their eating habits to eat only when hungry. Many found a positive support group to provide encouragement on a long-term basis. Some experienced weight loss as a byproduct of their healthier lifestyles.

Scale Back Alabama did not endorse any specific type of diet or exercise program and did not promote rapid weight loss. Anyone considering starting a weight-loss or exercise program should check with his/her health care provider first.

More information about the program is available at www.scalebackalabama.com. Scale Back Alabama was sponsored by the Alabama Hospital Association, Alabama Department of Public Health and Barber Dairies.