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Kandiyohi County Area Family YMCA to launch diabetes prevention program

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By: [Anne Polta](#), West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — A program that combines group support and education with lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of diabetes will be launched this week at the Kandiyohi County Area Family YMCA.

A few openings are still left in the Y Diabetes Prevention Program, which starts Thursday.

“We can take 15 people total,” said Christy Marthaller, of the Y. “We have financial assistance available too.”

The program is partly modeled after a Minnesota pilot project aimed at determining whether group education and coaching can successfully delay or prevent Type 2 diabetes in individuals who are already at risk of the disease.

The Y in Willmar was one of the sites for the pilot program, which has since ended. Among the lessons learned: The group model is successful and cost-effective at helping people with pre-diabetes make lifestyle changes.

Individuals who participated in the local program found it beneficial, Marthaller said.

Evidence is continuing to mount in support of healthful eating, increased physical activity and moderate weight loss as a strategy to stave off type 2 diabetes in people who already have pre-diabetes, defined as meeting certain high-risk criteria.

Some studies conducted for the National Institutes of Health have found the likelihood of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented by more than 50 percent among these individuals when they adopt and sustain lifestyle changes.

The Y used this evidence to develop its Diabetes Prevention Program in conjunction with Indiana University. The program, which also has been recognized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is national, Marthaller said. “It’s got a little bit more oomph behind it.”

Classes will meet at the Willmar Y for 16 core sessions, each one hour long. A trained coach will cover topics such as healthful eating, getting started with physical activity, overcoming stress, staying motivated and more. After the initial 16 sessions, participants will continue to meet once a month for ongoing support to maintain their progress.

The goals are for participants to reduce their body weight by 7 percent and increase their physical activity to 150 minutes a week. As a bonus, the program fee will include use of the Y's facility, Marthaller said. For an additional small fee, program participants also may bring a family member or other support person to the classes, she said. "Buddies are always good."

To qualify for the program, participants must be previously diagnosed with pre-diabetes or meet risk criteria for developing type 2 diabetes. These include being overweight, inactive, age 45 or older, having a parent or sibling with diabetes, having elevated blood pressure and/or cholesterol levels, and a past history of diabetes during pregnancy.