

THE CASE FOR EMPLOYEES LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

*How a Plant Based Initiative Changed Behaviors
That Have Lifelong Results*



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WELLNESS WORKS HERE

Introduction

One in three Americans will die of heart diseaseⁱ. The leading killer of Americans can be prevented and reversed by simply changing what you eat. In addition, Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and some forms of cancer can also be improved or eradicated just by changing one's diet. Based on our challenges, we have seen that switching to a predominantly whole food plant based diet can radically change a person's health in as little as 10 days.

What is a Whole Food Plant Based Diet?

- » A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes
- » Eliminates processed foods and refined carbohydrates
- » Eliminates all animal protein (beef, poultry, eggs and seafood)
- » Eliminates all dairy (milk, butter, cheese and yogurt)
- » Elimination of added fat in the form of oils and butters

Organizations That Recommend a Whole Food Plant Based Diet:

- » Recommended by American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists “a Plant-Based Diet for patients with type 2 diabetes”.
- » The American Institute for Cancer Research, which suggests “eating mostly plant-based foods” as an important strategy for cancer prevention.
- » The American Diabetes Association, in its 2018 guidelines recommends a plant based diet as a “healthful option for people with type 2 diabetes”.
- » Kaiser-Permanente recommends eating a plant based diet.
- » It has been proven to prevent and reverse coronary artery disease.

Benefits of a Whole Food Plant Based Diet

High fiber, low fat diets have been shown for decades to improve health outcomes of individuals. Simply changing what you consume, can considerably change your health in a short period of time. A whole food plant based diet has been shown to help manage, and in many cases reverse coronary artery diseaseⁱⁱ, Type 2 diabetesⁱⁱⁱ, autoimmune issues^{iv}, colon, breast, and prostate cancers^v. It lowers cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar. It has also been shown to help with the symptoms of depression, osteoarthritis^{vi}, and obesity. It can be safely used in conjunction with most medical treatments and has no adverse side effects, unlike pharmaceuticals. In the past, treatment of chronic disease by diet was not thought to be a long lasting method to treat disease. Instead the easier route of managing the symptoms through drugs became standard practice. Managing symptoms will not reverse or cure the disease. It will just manage symptoms as the disease progresses. The high fiber diet helps to feed the body's immune system, with an added benefit of making the body more resilient to fight off disease than the Standard American Diet.

The Good Life Challenge: What It Is

- » The health initiative is a 10-day whole food plant based food challenge started by Victor Central School District, Health and Wellness Coordinator, Doug Schmidt, who survived a heart attack at 49 years of age.
- » The initiative began in one school district and was offered to teachers and staff. The positive results of the challenge encouraged them to offer it to a larger group.
- » In January 2018 it was offered to 35 school districts for teachers and staff. 1300 people participated in the challenge.
- » In January 2019 the initiative was held again and offered to 75 school districts for teachers and staff and 4 businesses. This time over 3200 participated.

- » In the fall of 2018 training began to place plant based coaches in participating districts. The coaches will be the resident experts to support staff in their understanding of plant based nutrition. To date they have trained 40 plant based coaches and have a further training session scheduled for the fall of 2019.

Specifics of the Challenge

1. Each participant received the book *The Engine 2 Seven Day Rescue* by Rip Esselstyn. The book contains the science and medical research supporting a plant based diet as the healthiest way to improve one's health and includes recipes. If they participated the previous year they had the option of *The Engine 2 Cookbook*.
2. Participants had access to a private Facebook group to support each other and to answer questions.
3. Daily online newsletters were emailed to participants with recipes, success stories, and supporting medical research.
4. Some of the participants were offered biometric screenings at the end of the 10 days to see what 10 days of eating healthy could do. The biometric screening offering was dependent on the insurance coverage offered by the district.

Promoting the Challenge

The Good Life Challenge was offered to all Smola Consulting's clients/ employer groups. Smola Consulting identified and worked with key individuals of each client who can lead the wellness initiatives. These individuals are commonly referred to as Wellness Champions or Wellness Coordinators. In person meetings with these key individuals were conducted beginning in September and continued through December in preparation for the January 2019 program start.

Sixty of the school districts who were offered this program are members of two Health Insurance Consortia: The Finger Lakes Area School Health Plan (FLASHP) and the Genesee Area Healthcare Plan (GAHP). Each one of these school districts have either a Wellness Champion or Wellness Coordinator. These individuals were instrumental in promoting and rolling out the program in their school districts.

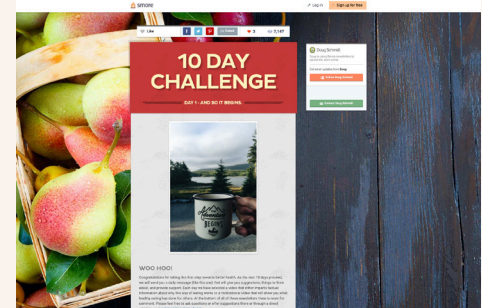
Ontario County was another client that participated. Similar to the school districts, the program in Ontario County was rolled out by their 15 Wellness Champions.

The Challenge was also offered to all members of the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NYS AHPERD) as a member benefit. The Challenge was promoted during the Association's annual conference in November 2018 via a keynote address.

A month before the challenge, we held a kickoff event in which over 500 people attended. This event was staffed by the plant based coaches.



PLANT BASED COACHES TRAINING



NEWSLETTER SAMPLE



COACHES HELPING AT KICK-OFF MEETING

We had local businesses, lifestyle medicine practitioners and plant based vendors attend, as well as guest speakers. We live streamed this on YouTube for those that couldn't attend. Interested participants voluntarily signed up for the Challenge via email.

Demographics of the Group

Those who signed up for the 10-Day Plant Based – Good Life Challenge in January 2019 were employees of over 75 New York State School Districts as well as 4 employers from Smola Consulting clients.



Engagement

Over 3,200 people participated in The Good Life Challenge in January 2019 and received daily emails for several days before the event began and during the 10 days of the Challenge. The daily number of “opens” on the emails far exceeded the number of people who signed up. Fourteen digital newsletters were distributed leading up to and during the days of the challenge. Those 14 newsletters received a total of 67,210 opens averaging 4,800 views per newsletter! The newsletters could be forwarded by participants to anyone that they felt could benefit from the information.

Outcomes

1) BIOMETRICS

Biometric data was available from 124 people who participated in the challenge. Wegmans Food and Pharmacy provided the biometric screenings. Fifteen of the participants were repeat participants and shared their prior year biometric testing results. The average age of this group was 52 years.

By the Numbers: Participant Biometric Data 2018-2019

	2018			2019		
	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
BMI	35.71%	57.14%	71.40%	53.33%	40.00%	6.67%
Glucose	86.67%	13.33%		100.00%		
HDL	60.00%		40.00%	66.67%		33.33%
Ratio	53.33%		46.67%	86.67%	13.33%	
Total Cholesterol	73.33%	20.00%	6.67%	86.67%	13.33%	

“I am so thankful for this experience—I didn’t know that my cholesterol was high until I did my pre-challenge blood work! My cholesterol dropped from 247 on 1/6 to 175 on 1/18! ALL my other numbers went down too and I learned that I CAN survive without snacks and sugar.”

- CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

II) PARTICIPANTS IN PAST CHALLENGES REPORTED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

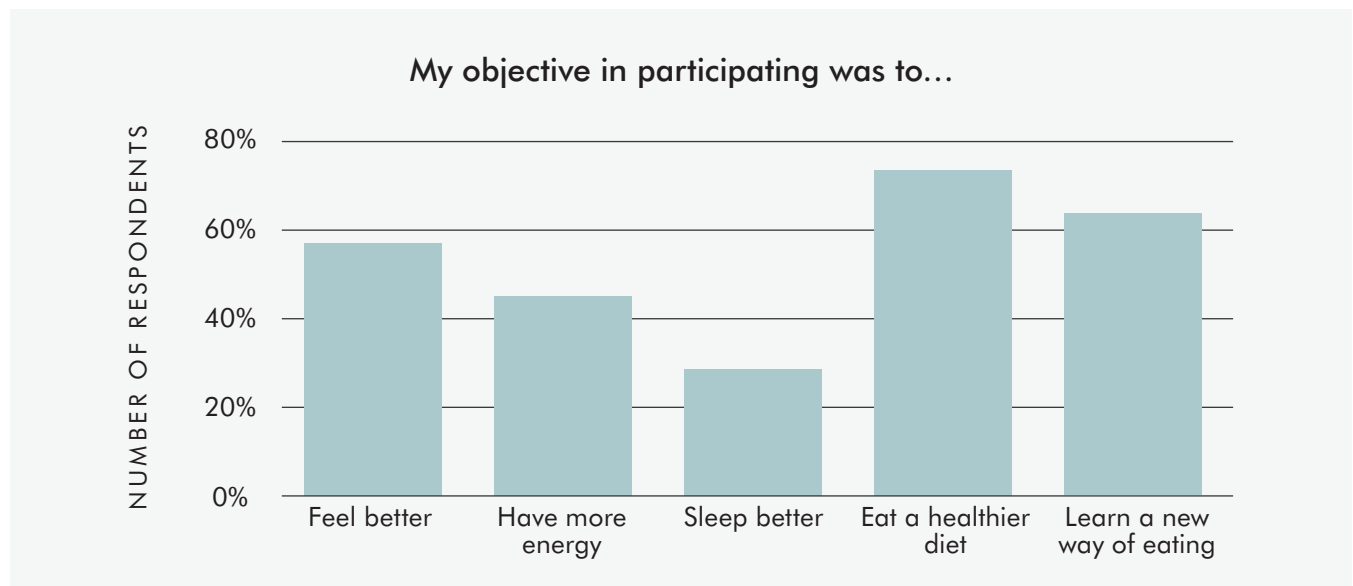
- » Lowered total cholesterol up to 50 points
- » Lowered Blood pressure
- » Lower Glucose numbers
- » Weight loss
- » Increased energy
- » Better sleep
- » Reduction in prescription medications

“Had a regular check up today. Did the blood work on Monday the 14th. My doctor described my blood work as “impressive.” My triglycerides were half of what they were last June! I will be continuing this plan and thank you all for this group. I have no heartburn or stomach problems and the weight continues to come off!”

– CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

III) POST ACTIVITY SURVEY RESULTS

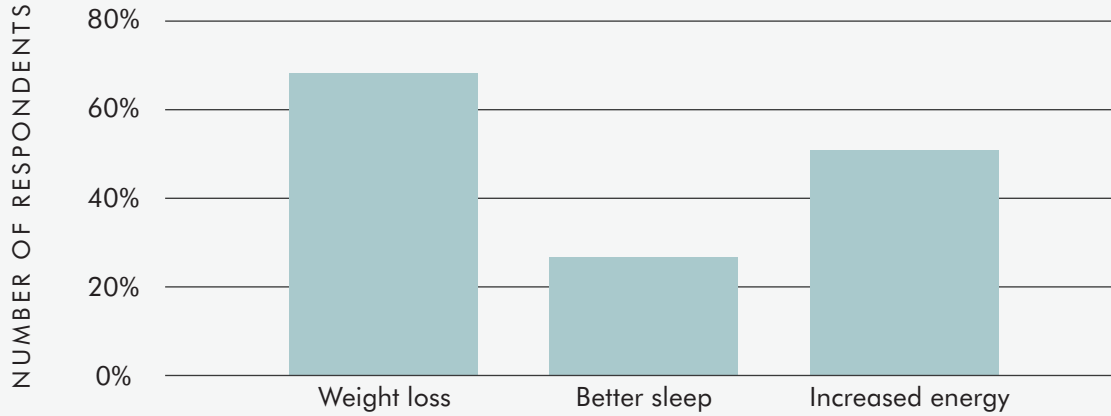
A few weeks after the challenge, a survey was conducted with 10% of the challenge participants completing the survey.



“This challenge has me feeling better than I’ve felt in a long time and the intestinal discomfort is almost completely gone!! I also have much more energy than I’ve had in years, which is another thing I was seeing specialists for, who would test my thyroid, and run blood tests and came up with nothing. My blood work is actually excellent as well as my biometrics, but I was feeling pain daily and it was draining me of my energy. I was exhausted all the time which was causing me to feel like less of a mother to my son, not wanting to do much of anything, and I’ve been dragging at work. This challenge has helped me so much more than doctors have! I think that really says a lot for the plant-strong lifestyle. ... This experience has definitely been a life changer for me. So...total cholesterol went from 219 to 109. TC/HDL from 4.3 to 2.3. Glucose 95 to 84. BP no change (115/78). Lost 6 lbs and BMI down 1.3. Place me solidly in the believer column. I have struggled with hyperlipidemia for 25+ years. My total cholesterol has never been so low.”

– CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

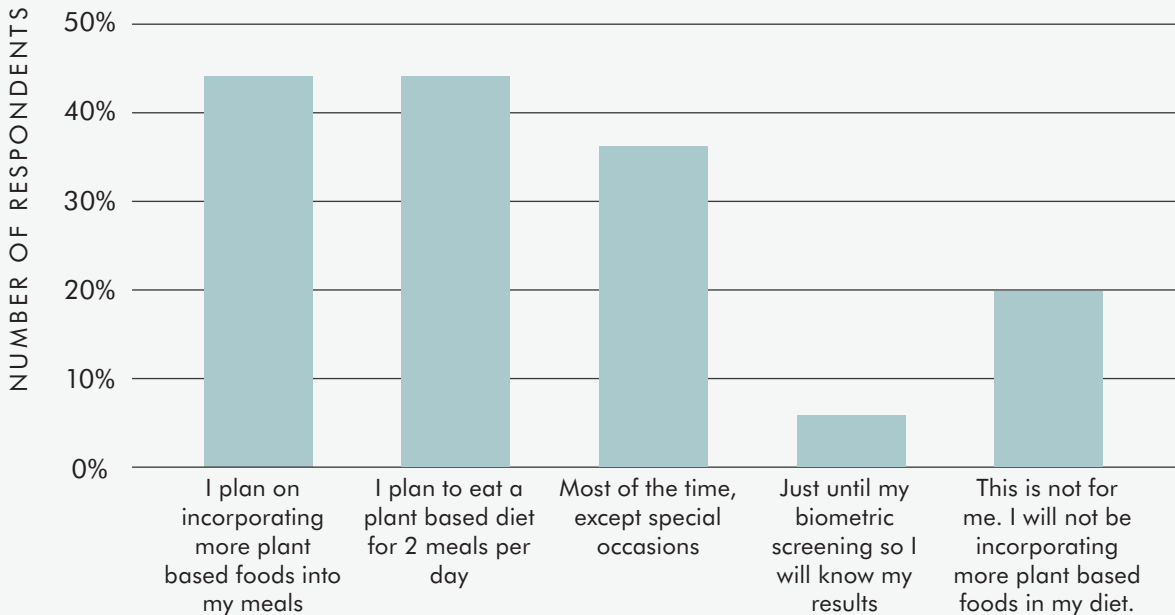
Overall Changes From Challenge



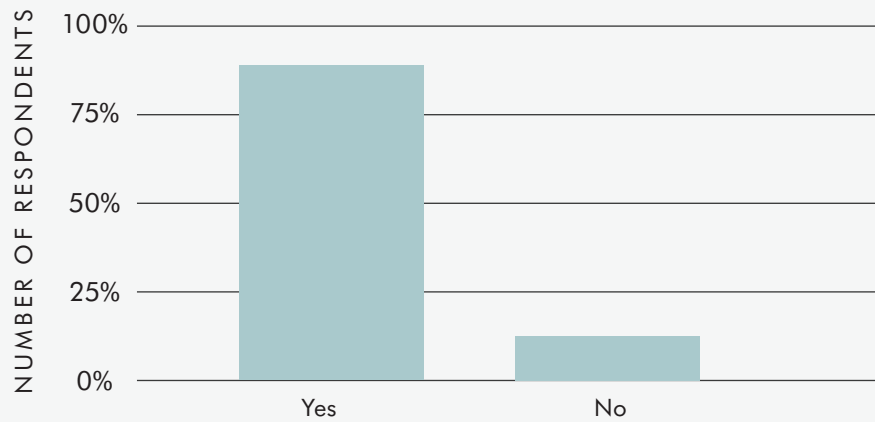
“As a PE teacher I read “The China Study” years ago and knew the benefits of a whole food plant based diet but never followed through. After having a second baby it was time to take control over sugar, oil, processed foods, meat and dairy. My husband and I have lost a total of 15 pounds since Jan 7th. We have more energy after 7pm, sleep better, and are more hydrated. We’re much more conscious of what we are eating, reading nutrition labels, and we plan on sticking with our new eating lifestyle.”

– CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

Do you plan to continue to eat a plant based diet?



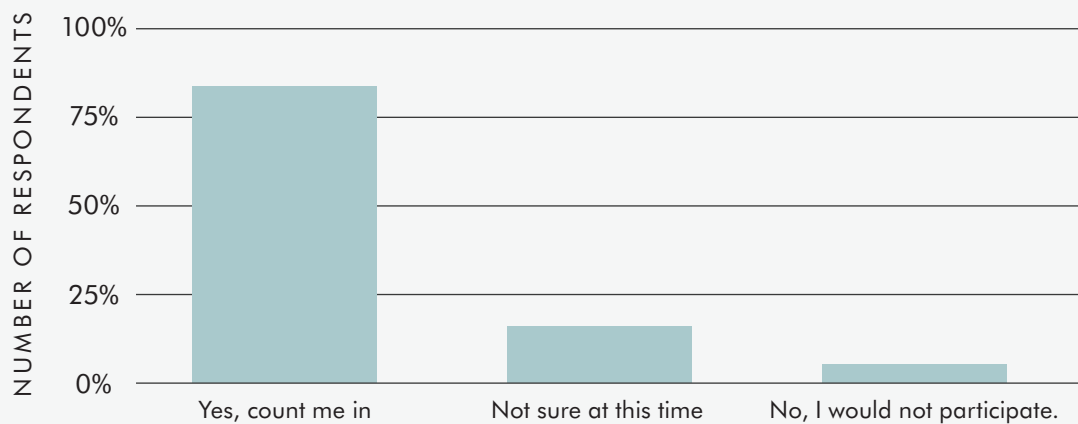
I feel my overall health has improved.



“I’m an ultra endurance athlete and regularly train 14-20+ hrs/week. I was skeptical about whether I’d have enough energy to sustain my endurance lifestyle on such a restrictive diet. To my delight, I’ve felt energetic, sharp, and completely satiated throughout the challenge! Even more importantly, my joint inflammation has nearly disappeared. They say you can’t out-train a bad diet. This girl will be making some permanent changes, and, hopefully, winning her age group at Ironman Wisconsin in September! Thank you!”

– CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

Would you participate in the challenge again?



Discussion

LIFELONG IMPACT

How do you show an ROI on something that never happened or quantify the cost avoidance?

- » Preventing someone with prediabetes from becoming diabetic is a cost savings as well as preventing future chronic disease and increased health care costs.

Helping someone lower their cholesterol is helping them to have better heart health, possibly preventing future major surgical events. Once a person has a major coronary incident, if they just manage their condition with drugs they have a 10.7% - 40.3% chance of having another incident in future years.^{vii}

Drug	Cost Per Month*
Crestor	\$242.00
Lisinopril	\$11.00
Plavix	\$210.00
Per month	\$463
Per year	\$5556

*Total cost without insurance reimbursement source:
<https://www.drugs.com/price-guide/>

As a result of the Good Life Challenge, we have seen people reduce their medicine for cholesterol, blood pressure, and diabetes. People, for the first time in decades, reported that the pain of their arthritis eased.

Conclusion

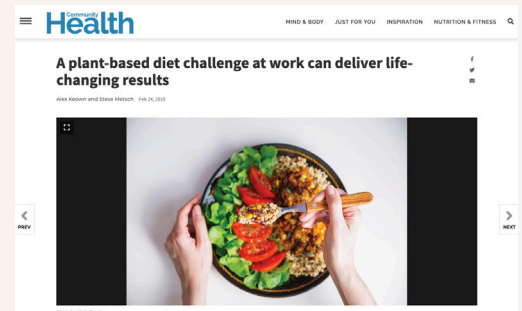
The benefits of a whole food plant based diet are well researched and verified^{viii}. Nothing can improve an individual's health more than changing what one consumes.^{ix} It coincides with the recommendations of most major medical journals. Increasing the consumption of fiber rich whole foods can help to turn the tide against rising insurance costs and chronic diseases.^x



One of the authors of this case study has been incident free since his first heart attack more than a decade ago. He lost 60 pounds and is off of all medications and ran his first marathon at age 58. The savings on prescription drugs alone can be seen and monitored.

GOOD MORNING AMERICA SEGMENT:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/teacher-heart-attack-inspires-1300-colleagues-10-day/story?id=52232892>



A Plant-based Diet Challenge At Work Can Deliver Life-changing Results (Feb. 24, 2019)

http://www.communityhealthmagazine.com/nutrition_and_fitness/a-plant-based-diet-challenge-at-work-can-d%20eliver-life/article_116189b0-d638-11e8-a284-cb70966ae3b9.html

This challenge, at first, gave me strength (once again) to separate my food choices from my husband's food choices, then it quickly transformed into a blossoming world of wonderfulness on so many levels. The community, learning and sharing has been off the charts amazing. The abundance of choices has been a shift I feel I can live with for life!

– CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT

About the Organization

Smola Consulting is a full service benefit and wellness consulting firm located in Rochester, NY. Smola Consulting consults with employer groups and consortiums of all sizes, primarily focusing on the mid-size to large clients nationwide. Our focus is in adding value and reducing or controlling overall benefit costs. Our employer and employee centered solutions are customized to meet the needs of each unique client.

Smola Consulting provides employer groups with skillful review, analysis, and recommendations with their medical, ancillary, and wellness programs. Our dedicated team approach offers consultative, creative solutions with unparalleled service. With over 80 years of collective experience, our team has the knowledge and resources to exceed each client's insurance and employee health and wellness needs.



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^x Dietary Fiber: Essential for a Healthy Diet, Mayo Clinic,
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