

Norman Wells contingent of Team Diabetes rakes in \$44,000

by Chris Puglia
Northern News Services
Lil' Inuit/Norman Wells

How can nine people in a town of only 500 people raise more than \$44,000?

If you ask Dee Opperman, one of the members of the North West Company's Team Diabetes, she'll tell you the answer is simple.

"We have a very giving community," said Opperman. Opperman, along with team members Amanda Feltham, Sheena Bailey, Jody Radmanovich, Joan Hickling, Sherry Hodgson, Georgie McKay, Nicole Richards and Marti Lys, have raised 18 per cent of the \$223,000 raised by the company's 67 team members spread across northern Canada and Alaska.

As a whole, the NWT has raised \$56,000 with the added contributions of two team members in Yellowknife and another in Tuktoo.

Team members have to raise \$3,000 each with the North West Company match-

ing that minimum. The fundraising efforts culminate in a marathon run, which will be held this year in the Grand Cayman, the largest of the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean, on Dec. 1.

"Our goal is to raise double what we have to," said Opperman. "Last year two people raised a little under \$10,000."

With \$4,888 raised per team member, they are nearing that mark, but just because the team is lucky to live in what Opperman calls a generous and supportive community, that doesn't mean they sit back and wait for the dollars to flow in.

"We work for it," she said. "Basically, we did anything we could make money at."

Included in that list of fundraisers were multiple dinners, a car wash, catering a retirement dinner and a wild game dinner held at the Royal Canadian Legion. The \$10,000 raised at that event was split between Team Diabetes and the Legion, which will use its

share to help the local branch of cadets. The evening featured fire ranging from muskox and caribou to fish and wild sheep. There was a dessert auction, a live auction and a silent auction as well.

This is Opperman's fourth year participating with Team Diabetes, but she is considering hanging up her shoes.

"I think it's time for me to retire," she said. "I had back surgery ... I am more of a walker than a runner."

Denise Batterton, who is one of the organizers of Team Diabetes for the North West Company in Winnipeg, says since 2002 the campaign has raised \$2.5 million.

Batterton is not surprised at the success Norman Wells has shown in its fundraising efforts and credits much of that achievement to Opperman's efforts.

"She is really a part of the community, well-respected and she really has passion," said Batterton. "When she has been the only participant in the



Members of Norman Wells' Team Diabetes Nicole Richards, left, Sheena Bailey, Dee Opperman, Jody Radmanovich, Amanda Feltham and Joan Hickling pose for a photo after a car wash that raised \$2,500. Missing are Sherry Hodgson, Georgie McKay and Marti Lys.

past, she has been one of the top fundraisers."

All the money raised through Team Diabetes stays in the North. The team's efforts are helped by donation boxes at Northern stores — these funds matched 50 cents on the dollar by head office —

and through other fundraising campaigns conducted by the North West Company, including the Gift of Hope Campaign, which raised \$105,000 last year nationwide and is targeting \$110,000 this year.

"The funding goes toward sponsoring diabetes runs in

Northern store communities and healthy recipe programs which help people prepare healthy foods using products available in their community," said Batterton.

"We want to encourage people to live a healthier lifestyle," she said.

First Nations meeting in Fort Simpson takes a look at what could be

by Roxanna Thompson
Northern News Services
Lil' Inuit/Fort Simpson

A forum on First Nations' health in the NWT held in Fort Simpson is part of the Dene Nation's plan to take an in-depth look at aboriginal health in the territory, and what needs to be done to address it.

Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus said there are issues in the territory related to health because when the

responsibility for health was transferred to the NWT in 1988, the intent was for aboriginal governments and the territorial government to work together to empower communities. That never happened, he added.

"Our goal has always been for our communities to administer health. So the question is, how do we best do that?" he asked.

In the territory, there could be one health system that provides for

everyone, but reflects the realities in the communities where most of the people are Dene, Erasmus said. "Two independent, but collaborative, systems could also be established so there is care for Dene people and for others," he said.

"We need to find a way to help our communities so that they are able to choose what makes sense to them," said Erasmus.

During the forum, participants

heard from Debbie DeLancey, the deputy minister of Health and Social Services, and Dr. Andre Corriveau, the NWT's chief public health officer, about the current system, how challenges are being faced, and factors that affect the health of First Nations people.

Participants broke into groups to talk about how they would like health administered in their communities and regions and what outstanding

health matters need to be addressed.

All of the gathered information will be put into a report that will be used to direct discussions at the next health forum taking place in the spring, said Erasmus. "This is an opportune time to talk about health because all of the different groups are open to discussion," he said. Erasmus said he is looking forward to working with the new territorial minister of health, Glen Abernethy.

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