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The southeast's most comprehensive academic health center locally operates UF Health The Villages Hospital, UF Health The Villages Hospital Freestanding ER and UF Health Leesburg hospital. www.UFHealth.org



THE VILLAGES HEALTH
The network operates six primary care centers and two specialty care centers locally. It also offers hundreds of free health and wellness classes online that are both live and pre-recorded. www.TheVillagesHealth.com



THE VILLAGES GROWN
The hyper-local community food system is anchored by a 45-acre growing complex to enable farm-to-table nutrition. It also operates a retail store, online ordering and an airstream mobile market. www.TheVillagesHealth.com



THE ENRICHMENT ACADEMY
The program operates a variety of fee based extra-curriculum courses on health and wellness topics for mind, body and spirit. Residents and anyone older than age 30 may register. www.TheEnrichmentAcademy.org

SUNDAY, LOCAL COMMENTARY | MONDAY, LOCAL COLUMNISTS | TUESDAY & THURSDAY, POLITICAL OPINION | WEDNESDAY, WELLNESS ADVICE | FRIDAY, READER THOUGHTS

A VIEW FROM THE VILLAGES HEALTH

Obesity is one of those terms that is often tiptoed around with the fear of coming across as insensitive or offensive. However, it is a very real thing and must be addressed.



Kristen Curtis

COMMENTARY

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States has over 20% of adults with obesity. The state of Florida has 27%. Obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) above 30, whereas extreme obesity is having a BMI above 40.

As the prevalence of obesity continues to climb, so does the risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, mental illness, and all-cause mortality.

The fantastic news is that obesity is manageable, treatable, and preventable. Monogenetic obesity is an inherited form of obesity and is rare. Rather,

multifactorial obesity is much more prevalent and results from the interactions among multiple genes as well as environmental and behavioral factors.

More simply stated, genetic changes in human populations occur to slowly to be responsible for the obesity epidemic we are facing.

As a registered dietitian, I've always had a passion for educating others while helping them to achieve their personal goals. In August 2018 I rolled out the first Intensive Behavioral Therapy for Obesity class at The Villages Health, which was later renamed "Choose to Lose."

The curriculum follows Medicare guidelines and is often available at little or no cost to the participant. Throughout the first year of the program, the group and I learned together. We became a close-knit group and had wonderful success. In fact, one stellar student was about to lose 99 pounds in one year.

Her story is one that I continue to share in my groups today and seems to truly inspire people to continue toward their weight loss goals. The curriculum continues to be modified to provide the most up-to-date



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information.

In one of my more recent classes the top three losers have lost average of 29 pounds over six months. I'm not here to tell you weight loss is easy, or that we can guarantee these kinds of results for everyone, but I can confidently say that myself and our other two registered dietitians have all had numerous success stories to share.

Aside from weight loss itself, member of the Choose to Lose program have consistently reported other improvements such as reducing the need for medications, improved cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure, enhanced energy, getting higher quality of sleep and having an improved mood.

One of the reasons I believe courses like this to be so effective is the accountability and support that is provided. At the beginning of a course, the group commits to a whole year, meeting weekly for four weeks, every other month through six months and then monthly for the remaining six months.

Not only are they accountable to the instructor, but to their classmates and most importantly themselves. I have been blessed to grow relationships

with the groups I lead, but it's incredibly inspiring to see the relationships they develop with one another and the support that's consistently offered.

This past year has been undeniably challenging for many. The COVID-19 pandemic has been referred to the "COVID-19 pounds gained." It's never too late to take charge of your health. Joining a group or beginning a new program does not mean starting a diet.

The term diet suggests deprivation and restriction, which do not promote positive behavior modifications. Health improvement, including successful weight loss, requires a lifestyle change.

The Villages Health offers numerous forms of education, both individually and in the group setting. It is our desire to keep you healthy and heal you quickly while creating America's Healthiest Hometown.

If we can assist you in any way, please contact our office at 352-674-1770.

Kristen M. Curtis, MS, RDN, LDN, is a registered licensed dietitian nutritionist and population health supervisor for The Villages Health.

Neighborhood Album: View Photos Captured by Your Friends and Neighbors in The Villages, D2

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