

2012 Mayor's Fitness Award Recipients

WEIGHT LOSS CATEGORY

Susan Davis: Faced with three big events in 2012, her son's high school graduation, a trip to the beach, and a family wedding, Susan decided it was time to lose weight. On January 1st, she gave up soda, started tracking her calories with the "my fitness pal" app, and started walking for exercise. She has lost 45 pounds and is keeping it off with her newfound good eating and moving habits. She states she was unaware of the amount of calories she was taking in from the foods she was eating and has learned a lot about eating the right foods. Seeing results continued to motivate her to be healthier. In addition to being smaller, she has much more energy. Her nominator states "she is a busy professional, as well as a wife and mother, so it wasn't easy to find time in her busy schedule for herself."

Robin Elkthunder: In the past year, Robin has shifted into an incredibly active lifestyle. She has lost weight but even more importantly she has found herself almost craving exercise while also avoiding "bad" food. She attends fitness classes, uses home exercise videos and serves as a good fitness example to her son. In addition, she has researched various nutrition options and is definitely open to trying new foods that she would not have considered in the past. She has been a role model to others in her office as well. She takes time to read about healthy eating. Her goal is not to be driven by fads but rather to find successful ways to keep the weight loss journey interesting as well as successful. As pant sizes have gone down her motivation has stayed up. This motivation has encouraged people around her to be more aware of food choices and the variety of exercise options available around us. Robin inspires daily with her commitment.

Stacy Ford: Stacy has worked very hard over the past year to drop a significant amount of weight. She started with the Columbia College Biggest Loser challenge, but didn't stop there. She has continued with the Columbia Slimdown Challenge and the Columbia Steps Challenge. She has worked on making small changes in her life such as tracking calories and steps so that she can maintain her healthier lifestyle. Not only does her walking keep her active, but also gives her time to re-energize. She recently took her youngest son to the Scattering Fork Outdoor Center and was able to traverse a high ropes suspension bridge. She draws motivation from those around her committed to the same goal of weight loss and healthy living. She is able to look at her progress as a long term commitment and continues to work towards her goal.

Susan Polacek: When her husband asked her to join him on a weight loss journey, Susan was hesitant. With his encouragement and the motivation to be healthier, happier, and to have more energy, she has lost 90 pounds this year. In addition to counting calories, she has been making healthier choices and using better ingredients in her meals. Additionally, exercise has become a regular part of her life, either running or working out on the elliptical machine. Since losing the weight, she and her husband have been more excited to get up and do things together and are having a great time continuing to motivate each other. Her nominator states she is "very proud of her and her accomplishments."

Travis Polacek: Last November Travis had a life changing moment when he stepped on the scale and realized that at 27 years old he had hit 302 pounds. Starting the next day he changed his lifestyle by

focusing on tracking his caloric intake, portion control, and exercising 5 days a week. He invested time in educating himself about what food to eat. His ability to still eat foods he enjoys, but healthier options was and is encouraging. Exercise has truly become part of his lifestyle, instead of being just another chore. Today his current weight is 172 pounds. He has much more energy, is overall happier, and doing things he once felt were impossible. He can attribute his accomplishment to his inner drive and determination to change his life. Travis is now making the transition into maintaining his weight and I am confident his success will continue because not only does he still want it, but because he has made lifestyle changes to sustain it. In addition to his personal weight loss, Travis has motivated his wife, brother, colleagues at work, and a handful of friends. He is always there happily offering a helping hand, advice, and encouragement.

FITNESS CATEGORY

Craig Lycke: Almost 5 years ago, Craig was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. He was reaching 330lbs in weight and he knew something had to change. His doctor told him he could control his disease with diet and exercise, so he joined a running group called Walk the Block to train for a half marathon. Since then, he has completed multiple ½ marathons and 2 full marathons. He has also taken up biking, riding over 100 miles/week. He has lost well over 100lbs and currently weighs in lightly less than 200lbs and is no longer diabetic. Not only has he changed his lifestyle by including fitness in his daily lifestyle, Craig has motivated so many people during his journey. He now coaches new runners in the same running group he started in. Craig truly has dedicated himself in the team's success by sharing his story and running next to them to the finish line. He still gets emotional and teary eyed when his team crosses the finish line because he knows how hard it is to take that first step. One nominator stated "He has a beautiful way of expressing his thoughts in words, and his description of a sunrise out on the trail, or a sunset over the lake would be enough to inspire anyone to get out there and experience the joy of using your body to enjoy this gorgeous world around us. Craig is living his life by example, and there are a lot of people inspired by his efforts."

MENTOR CATEGORY

Kiersa Toll: Kiersa has had a pivotal role in increasing the daily physical activity of the children at Lee Elementary school. She has served as Lee Elementary School's Walking School Bus Liaison to the PedNet Coalition for the past 2 years. This semester she played an important role in establishing a viable transportation alternative for the students at Lee by implementing a "staging post," just over a half mile from the school, for parents to drop their children off at in the morning and pick them up again in the afternoon. From this "staging post," children walk to and from school, Monday - Friday, rain or shine, all semester long, under adult supervision. This staging post has not only worked physical activity into the daily lives of the children that participate, but has also reduced the car traffic around Lee School, making it safer for other children to walk or bicycle to school.

Karen Wingert: Karen is a physical therapist AND registered nurse, specializing in women's health AND oncology care. She recently received certification as a cancer exercise specialist through the American College of Sports Medicine and is the only individual in Missouri to have received this certification. She has led cancer survivor exercise classes at Ellis Fischel since 2010. Her classes were initially part of a grant from the Susan G Komen Foundation, but she has continued them even after the grant period was over. Each class is 6 weeks long with 6 participants at a time so she can closely monitor their form and performance. This summer she received a new grant to teach a 16 week class for breast cancer survivors to look at the effects of exercise on quality of life and fatigue. She works with a population that may be hesitant to return to physical activity during or after cancer treatment.

YOUTH CATEGORY

Angel Bard: Angel was nominated by one of her adapted gymnastics volunteer coaches for her great attitude during practices and her enthusiasm for her sports involvement. In addition to participating in gymnastics whenever it is offered, Angel has participated in horseback riding at Cedar Creek Therapeutic Riding Center, Challenger softball, and has attended Wonderland Camp. She is an accomplished competitor in the Special Olympics and has recently medaled in the softball throw, javelin throw in Springfield, Missouri in addition to participating in track and field events. When she is not participating in organized group sports, Angel likes to play catch with her family and ride her bike. She has recently graduated high school and is working and volunteering with ACT.

Greg Hill-Greg has recently celebrated his 35th anniversary as a Special Olympics volunteer and has been involved with hundreds of special needs athletes. In addition to his full-time career as an insurance agent, Greg has been a mainstay in child/student development for many years. He has been involved with Daniel Boone Little League as a Board of Directors member, coach, and was awarded Volunteer of the Year. He is no stranger to Columbia Public Schools either. He helped develop Hickman High School's Touchdown Club and served that organization as President and Treasurer. At Rock Bridge High School, he has served on the Partners in Education Committee, the Hall of Fame Selection Committee, and been a team parent for the girls' golf team. According to his nominator, "He is modest about his influence on children, but his results as a leader are significant."

Jeremy Walton: Jeremy was also nominated by his adapted gymnastics volunteer coach for his dedication to Special Olympics sports. He has been involved in Special Olympics for over 10 years and has competed in every sport except Bocce Ball. Throughout the year, he participates in at least 2 sports at a time including basketball, softball, golf, tennis, swimming, and bowling, to name a few. He not only competes at local tournaments in each of his sports, but also recently competed in the State Games in Cape Girardeau and brought home a bronze medal in tennis and a silver medal in softball. In addition to his organized group sports, he likes to walk his dog every day for exercise. Jeremy recently graduated high school and is working at Giving Gardens, the nursery at Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises.

Rachael Stoerker: Rachael has been a member of the Hickman Competitive Cheer Squad for her entire high school career. She has been a motivating force for every girl that has been a part of the program. She is always the first one to try something new, works hard to obtain and achieve new skills, and encourages each and every one of her teammates. She works hard to perfect a performance, game, or competitive routine, and always looks for more ways to improve her skills. This wouldn't normally be anything out of the ordinary, except for the fact that Rachael is deaf. There have been many times where Rachael cannot hear music or counts for routines, but she relies on her ability to read lips and the help of her teammates to continue to perform to the best of her abilities. Rachael is currently looking into attending college and continuing her cheer career on a collegiate squad.