

Division 5 Gets Skinny

- **Start of Weight Watchers Program**

By ERIC RAPP

(April 4, 2002) More than 30 MTA employees put their money where their mouth was on Monday at Arthur Winston Division 5, signing up for the Weight Watchers At Work program.

Division Manager Mike Lensch wanted to reduce employee injuries and assist those who wanted to lose weight but were having trouble. Lensch is a participant in Weight Watchers and has lost more than 50 pounds since he started.

"I haven't felt this good in years," he says.

With the At Work program, Weight Watchers aims to make it easy for employees to participate by coming to their workplace.

It's perfect for Bus Operator Lateefah Bussey, who joined the program Tuesday. As she says, "I'll be at work anyway, so I don't have to go out to some other place after I get home."

For one hour, once a week, Weight Watchers representative Erica Sercus will come to Division 5 to meet with the employees enrolled in the program. After a brief and confidential weigh-in, the remaining time will be spent in a group meeting designed to help each member towards his or her goal.

Winning points

The program is simple to understand. Every person is assigned a number of "points" per day based on their current weight. Every food portion is equivalent to a certain number of points, based on fat content, calories, and other factors.

The idea is to eat foods with the correct number of points rather than worrying about eating specific things. There are no forbidden foods. The program teaches better eating habits by emphasizing portion control and a healthier diet.

For instance, a double cheeseburger with fries may sound good, but would probably use up much of a day's worth of points, whereas healthy foods such as broccoli or other vegetables have almost no points at all.

Weight Watchers has determined the number of points for most food, including fast food, ethnic food, and home-cooked meals. All this information is included in the At Work starting kit.

Helping each other

Patsy Goens, Division assistant manager, is joining the Weight Watchers At Work program not only to lose weight, but to show Division 5 employees that management is committed to this program. She also wants to expand the division's weight room to include cardiovascular exercise machines as well as weights.

Cookie Robertson, a 23 year MTA veteran Bus Operator who is signing

up to be a member, says that having a support group of fellow employees will help make the program work even better.

She was a Weight Watchers member once in the past and says, "It really worked."

Support isn't the only thing fellow members can offer. "We can keep an eye on each other too," Lensch says.

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