

► Olean

Area health-care professionals will walk to California — figuratively, anyway

OLEAN — On March 4, 136 members of the staff at Olean Medical Group in Franklinville, Ellicottville, Cuba and Olean began walking to Hollywood, Calif.

This "walk" is part of CEO John Camus' 2009 Wellness Challenge. The physicians and nurses and office staff are still at their jobs. The trip is a virtual walk and the individuals are tracking their steps each day with pedometers and then reporting their totals to team captains.

Eight teams are making their way to Hollywood via a route that Mr. Camus has mapped out. The combined steps determine the mileage traveled on the map. Only Mr. Camus knows what is in store for the team that reaches Hollywood first.

The walk emphasizes healthier living. Eating more fruits and vegetables with smaller meat portions, exercising and getting plenty of uninterrupted sleep are all part of the message of which Mr. Camus wants his staff to be more aware. He is quick to point out results of a recent study.

The New England Journal of Medicine recently published a study in which 811 adults participated. They were divided into four groups and each group was given a different diet to follow.

Upon completion of the study, it was found that it

didn't matter which diet was chosen. Each group had one common practice that proved to be the determining outcome. Each person cut out 750 calories a day and added at least 90 minutes of exercise each week.

The results were conclusive in that these participants lost inches from their waistlines and their cholesterol and insulin levels dropped significantly.

After all was said and done, the magic formula turned out to be less food and more exercise.

"When I came to Olean 16 months ago, I made up my mind that I was going to get in better shape," Mr. Camus said, "and I began eating better foods and exercising much more than I previously had."

Mr. Camus lost almost 30 pounds in the first 12 months and with daily workouts at the YMCA and rounds of golf after work, he is doing well maintaining the program he initiated.

"I am just pleased that I have been able to stick to my goals and frankly, I feel great and my stamina is much better," Mr. Camus said.

Tricia Henzel, Olean Medical Group's director of physician recruitment and marketing, said "He (Mr. Camus) has become a real role model for our group.

"We have always had very active individuals in the

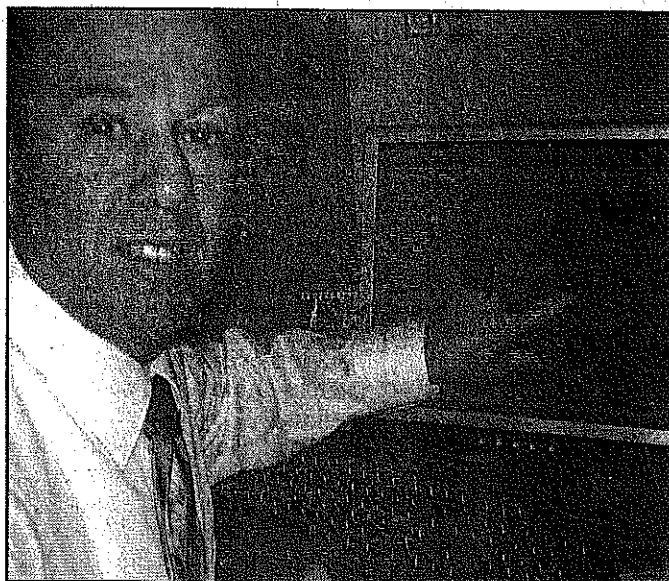


Photo submitted

Olean Medical Group CEO John Camus issued a wellness challenge to staff in Franklinville, Ellicottville, Cuba and Olean to take a virtual walk to Hollywood, Calif. Above, he points out the route.

group, like doctors Bill Cihak and Gil Witte and many of our nurses, but several more have taken his lead and have begun personal exercise programs," she said. "It doesn't appear that it will take us very long to get to California because everyone seems to be turning in very high numbers."

The challenge has been extended to the group's partner in education, Boardmanville Elementary School. Mrs. Shelly Waugh's fifth-grade class has responded to his challenge and they, too, are recording their steps in an effort to get to

Hollywood.

"We are very excited that the students have joined us in this effort because they are setting good examples for their peers," Mr. Camus said. "It is so important for our younger people to learn good habits because this regimen will carry them through the rest of their lives — and we're having fun with it too, he said.

There are history and trivia questions along the route and small rewards along the way, but the real reward is for each person to establish a regular walking program on his or her way to Hollywood