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Orcas Power & Light Cooperative

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OPALCO Employees Lose 208.6 Pounds in Weight Loss Challenge

Congratulations to the 17 successful finishers of OPALCO's 2011 **Move It! & Lose It! Challenge!** David Harold of Friday Harbor was the "Big Loser" this year with a total weight loss of 13.94%. Team "Diet Pirates" of Eastsound, including Suzanne & John Olson and Anne Bertino, won the team competition with a combined weight loss of 9.13%. Team Ctrl+Alt+Del Part Deux of Eastsound, including Nancy & Kevin Loomis, Michelle Beal and Sylva Edwards, won the team participation prize. All together, a total of 208.6 pounds were shed during the 16-week challenge and **EVERYONE** who participated lost weight for an average weight loss of 5.12%.

OPALCO's commitment to a healthy workplace includes a wellness program that encourages—and rewards—healthy habits. OPALCO gets up to a six percent discount on its insurance rates (through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association – NRECA) in exchange for hosting a wellness program—and then is required to spend that savings on employee wellness activities and incentives. The Challenge was open to all employees, spouses and retirees who are enrolled in OPALCO's insurance program. Participants formed teams—with names like "Mission Slim Possible" and "The LOAD Shedders"—and competed to earn participation points and lose weight, measured in percentage loss. The program included weekly challenges that addressed personal growth, nutrition, fitness and team work which helped participants to learn and practice new skills and build healthy habits. The friendly competition was a great morale booster and also built a workplace culture of peer support and encouragement.

This was "Season Two" of OPALCO's Move It! weight loss challenge and 11 of the 17 participants were Move It! alums from 2010. "The structure of the program is so helpful," said returning Move It challenger Ed Lago. "The more time we spend in the program, the more our healthy habits are reinforced." The 2011 Challenge champion David Harold cited the value of modeling healthy eating and exercise for his children: "During the Challenge, my wife and I made wholesale changes to what food we put on the table for our family. We both lost weight but, more importantly, I can see my kids making healthier choices now, too." Harold added, "My son is a lot like me – in his body shape and in his appetite for high-calorie snacks and soda. If I can save him the burden and health consequences of the extra weight I've had to carry around as an adult – what a great gift."

With "Season Two," OPALCO added a maintenance program that rewards Move It! alum with incentives on a quarterly basis for maintaining their weight and for additional percentage weight loss. Even in the off season, OPALCO's work environment and culture is influenced by the wellness program. The big box of donuts and pastries is an endangered species at co-op meetings; fresh fruit and vegetables are now the norm. "The wellness program is a tremendous asset and sets a positive tone in the office," said General Manager Randy Cornelius. "It's great to see the healthy and significant changes in individuals – and I expect to see less absenteeism and positive gains in employee retention over the longer term."

OPALCO is our cooperative electrical utility serving more than 11,000 co-op member-owners on 20 islands in San Juan County. We provide electricity that is 95% greenhouse-gas free and is predominately generated by hydro-electric plants. OPALCO was founded in 1937 to bring electricity to our rural islands.

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Photos and captions:

- 1) David Harold – after his winning weight loss of 13.94%.
- 2) Team Diet Pirates – after their combined winning weight loss of 9.13%