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TED Talk Essay – Program Background

TEDxABQ, one of the largest and oldest TEDx events in the world, is a movement of people who are stimulating dialogue and putting ideas into action to improve our community. YOU are that community, and we can't wait to see you!

The TEDxABQ conference, now in its sixth year, will return to UNM's Popejoy Hall to inspire 2,000 TEDxABQ fans with innovative, dynamic, homegrown ideas. The event places New Mexico on the global stage and effects positive change by altering the way we think about our state locally, and by fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, where big ideas are embraced and then powered by passionate people like you, who give their time and energy to make them happen.

TEDxABQ, the independently organized, TED licensed conference has showcased New Mexico's biggest ideas and most inspiring thinkers to packed audiences. Every year, a staff of 120+ passionate volunteers makes this event a reality. TEDxABQ 2014 highlights 18 remarkable ideas from NM's most passionate artists, thinkers, innovators, leaders, and scientists among others. TEDxABQ talks from the 2013 event have been viewed over 700,000 times in locations across the globe.

What is your idea worth spreading? This is the content being released:

Weight Loss Motivation

In a country where we have a \$586.3 billion weight loss industry and unlimited access to food, we are still among the top ten most obese nations in the world. It's clear something is missing. It is not new news that you need to exercise and eat your fruits and veggies, but it is the why behind the how that needs to be discovered, cultivated, and given room to grow. As a registered dietitian for Sandia National Laboratories' corporate wellness program, my job isn't all about food; rather it's about finding what motivates a person.

The problem isn't in the food and exercise recommendations themselves, but in the reasons behind why we choose to (or not to) partake in the health behaviors. When we chalk up change to vanity, it is almost an inevitable fail every time. Sure, swim suit season or that upcoming cruise or family reunion buys momentary motivation, but it doesn't buy true behavior change. So, how do we get there?

I have found that we, as human beings, have a desire to be a part of something big, something bigger than ourselves. When we are, we become more and more selfless, and interestingly, we take better care of ourselves. I found this first to be true in my one-on-one appointments. I found that individuals who were plugged into a system - a family, a cause - were much more likely to meet the health behavior goals we set. I have also found this to be true on a much larger scale. At Sandia, we offer an annual holiday weight management program called "Maintain No Gain." The objective is to weigh-in before the holidays and then again afterward at the same weight. Sandia, being a lab of >7000 people, has a financial incentive in place that provides Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) funding for participation in our wellness programs. So in other words, this weight management program already had a financial incentive. What could be more motivating than money? Well, we found something! What if we took a typical weight management program and incentivized success with a charitable donation- a cause bigger than weight loss itself? My team connected with Sandia's community involvement group, who manages the charitable donations made on behalf of Lockheed Martin. They agreed to pledge \$5 per week, per person to Roadrunner Food Bank for every time a participant weighed in and maintained or lost weight (based on his/her initial weigh in). The results were amazing. In two years our program grew from 70-100 participants in 2010-2012 to 326 in 2013 and 1,257 in 2014! Over two years our program grew to over 12 times its original size. Interestingly, we found this became our most successful weight loss program, despite its timing of being offered over the holidays. Eighty-eight percent of

individuals lost or maintained their weight, compared to 50% in other weight loss programs. In the end we raised \$5,680 and \$28,045 in 2013 and 2014, respectively.

The more selfless we are, the better self-care we perform. I've seen this concept now on the large scale in our holiday weight management program. As a nutrition therapist at a local eating disorder clinic, I noticed this trend in individuals who recovered. Those who were plugged into a cause that believed in serving others (church, community service, or even as an eating disorder support group leader) tended to not only reach recovery quicker, but to maintain it longer. I have experienced this in my own personal battles with bulimia. Once I was in a position where I could help others, my struggles seemed to become obsolete.

If we could all find ways to build a cause bigger than ourselves, perhaps we will become a healthier nation- both mentally and physically.