

Real People, Real Change: One Woman's Journey with the National Diabetes Prevention Program

The National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) at the Marion branch of the Cedar Rapids Metro YMCA is making a meaningful impact by helping participants take control of their health through connection, accountability, and personalized support. The first cohort started August 2025, and the program quickly demonstrated strong engagement and promising outcomes. To keep momentum in the community, a second cohort was planned to begin in February 2026.

The program is led by two dedicated lifestyle coaches who bring complementary experience and a shared passion for helping others succeed. Together, they focus on building strong relationships with participants, creating a supportive environment where individuals feel seen, heard, and empowered. One of the program's biggest strengths has been participant retention. The coaches have intentionally taken time to get to know each participant individually, helping them stay connected not only to the program, but also to the people in the group. By encouraging participants to identify their own strengths and celebrate small wins, the program fosters confidence and long-term commitment.

"I feel like an entirely different person than I was one year ago. This class is 100% worth the time and effort."

One participant, Cari, has an inspiring story to share. "I have struggled to keep my weight and A1C levels under control since I had my first child over a decade ago. The physical changes and stressors that came with parenthood made me put myself on the backburner." Cari credits the program's accountability and sense of community as key drivers of her success. Starting with small, realistic changes like walking her daughter to school and adding more vegetables to family meals, she set one achievable goal each week during class. Cari reports less joint pain, reduced inflammation, and a renewed sense of confidence and well-being.

To keep participants engaged and supported, the program utilizes innovative engagement strategies. The coaches send out weekly recap emails highlighting session takeaways, encouragement, and upcoming events. As cohorts progress and relationships grow, coaches adapt the curriculum to reflect the personalities and goals of each participant. This individualized approach allows the program to remain flexible while still maintaining structure and evidence-based practices. Lifestyle change is never one-size-fits-all.

Small steps make lasting changes.

Find out if you're at risk of prediabetes.



hhs.iowa.gov/diabetes

"These little changes have accumulated over the last five months into real results. My A1C levels are back in the normal range, my blood pressure is lower, and I've lost 30 lbs."

- Cari