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## Dalton city workers get wellness tips

**By Karina Gonzalez, Staff Writer**

DALTON, Ga. — Blake Bishop said he had no idea how his eating habits were endangering his life.

Mr. Bishop, 30, a signal technician for Dalton's public works department, is among the 70 City of Dalton employees attending weekly wellness classes to lower cholesterol levels and achieve better overall health.

"I eat smaller quantities of meat and a lot of salads," he said after one of the recent sessions. "I look at the labels now. I didn't pay attention to that before."

Greg Batts, human resources director for Dalton, said all 450 city employees go through a health screening every year in February.

The city employees in the wellness class were selected to participate after screening determined some had high levels of cholesterol. This is the first year an option for improvement was given.

"If a person's figures were above a high risk for a cardiovascular event, they were given the chance to be in the class," Mr. Batts said.

"Cholesterol kills you," said Dr. Charles Taylor, a highly respected preventive medicine physician from Atlanta, as he led a session on healthy food choices that followed a risk reduction program.

"This is a recipe that is not just dieting, but eating better and exercising more," he said after the session.

According to the American Heart Association, high levels of "bad" cholesterol, or low-density lipoprotein, clog a person's arteries and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. People who have high levels of triglyceride, a form of fat created in the body, often have low levels of "good" high-density cholesterol, and a high level of "bad" cholesterol.

Many of those diagnosed with heart disease and diabetes have high triglyceride levels, according to the Heart Association.

Each Dalton employee received a journal to log personal health progress. A nutritionist each week helps the participants with developing a diet that works.

"It's definitely a challenge to take risks (out of) your diet," Mr. Bishop, a Rocky Face resident, said as he flipped through his white binder with notes.

Since he began the program he has lost more than 20 pounds, and his entire family is eating healthier, he said.