

Tahoe doc: Diet plays major role in people's health



Greg Bergner talks about the importance in diet in relation to health. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It was a new take on “you are what you eat.” Eat healthy food and you will be healthy, don’t do that and you are bound to suffer from myriad maladies.

This was the message Greg Bergner delivered March 8 to an overflowing crowd at Lake Tahoe Community College. Bergner is the director of lifestyle and wellness for Barton’s Center for Orthopedics & Wellness.

“Our bodies have a remarkable capacity to heal themselves even after we screw them up,” Bergner said.

That means it’s not too late to change your habits.

He explained how the top seven causes of death in the United States account for more than 80 percent of the deaths. Six of them are medical related. They are:

- No. 1 – heart disease
- No. 2 – cancer
- No. 3 – COPD (lung disease)
- Nos. 4-6 – accidents, stroke, Alzheimer's
- No. 7 – Type 2 diabetes.

Bergner said the only way to reverse heart disease is through a whole food plant based diet.

The difference between plant based and veganism is the latter is more of a lifestyle based on animal rights. Whole food would not allow something like olive oil because it's processed, nor are French fries acceptable.

Bergner spoke of studies starting in the 1990s that illustrated how diet impacts a person's health, most notably heart disease.

Studies are continually being done, with one from 2014 from the World Health Organization saying processed meats are a carcinogen. Bergner said it's not a fact the U.S. government is paying much attention to.

The Mediterranean diet also shows dramatic health benefits. It allows for fish, other meats, olive oil and wine. The portions of meat are small, which could be problematic for some people.

Bergner acknowledged not everyone is going to embrace a plant based diet. But he added – we all have choices. Start with eliminating processed meats, he said.

At the end of the talk he showed a video from Canada of an older gentleman and the outcome based on choices. In one

scenario he had made poor choices and was basically an invalid, the other made smarter decisions and was living an active life. The question was – What will your last 10 years be like?

The food one consumes will likely be a driving force in answering that question.