The first week in April is National Public Health Week and this year's theme is Building the Foundation for a Healthy America.

While the national theme is really geared more towards building on the foundation of public health successes over the years, such as the elimination of polio and dramatic reductions in the number of people who smoke, your local staff here at the Northeast Colorado Health Department is taking that theme to a more personal level.

We've taken a look at our own "foundations," some of which are a bit… eh hem… sturdier than others, and 30 of us are embarking on a challenge to see who can become the biggest loser. Of pounds.

Now I'm not saying that losing weight will solve all of our nations' collective ills. Although we live in a country where more than two-thirds of our adults are overweight or obese, we also live in a country where a baby born here is more likely to die before its first birthday than a child born in almost any other developed country; where the life expectancy has reached a record high of 78.1 years, but sill ranks 46th behind Japan and most of Europe, as well as countries such as South Korea and Jordan.

We spend more on health care than any other nation, but it is clear we are not living up to our potential. We obviously are facing more public health problems than simple dieting can fix, but healthy communities begin and are achieved with individual healthy lifestyles, and a healthy diet is a great place to start.

For 14 weeks we will have six separate teams from our Sterling, Fort Morgan and Yuma offices working together to motivate one of us into becoming the biggest loser. At two weeks in, we've lost a total of 75.89 pounds as an agency—not bad. Just keep in mind that 30 people on a diet for 98 days might make our customer service a bit rough around the edges, so please take that into consideration.

You know, there's just something about the camaraderie of working together toward a common goal, fighting to be healthy in this dog-eat-dog world (ooh, did somebody say eat?), the chorus of cheers as we celebrate an ounce lost, or the collective sympathy we offer when the scale tips the other direction…

Whatever. I'm here to win. Send your full-sugar, full-fat baked goods to our Fort Morgan office, 228 W. Railroad Ave. Fort Morgan, CO 80701, attn: Mel or Josie.

It's not that I'm actively advocating sabotage of my fellow employees; it's more of a highly intelligent form of strategic pseudo-psychology in which I'm trying to actually assist them as they gain more control over their willpower. Mmmmm hmmmm.