



## *E-Newsletter Update*

May 2004



From the *Active for Life* National Program Office

### *Support, encouragement and celebration can lead to program success*

Celebrating and affirming success is an excellent way to help people stay motivated to remain active. Several *Active for Life* grantees have recently seen the results of this tactic by holding AFL “graduations” and “reunions.”

Comments Melissa A. Watford, health education coordinator at FirstHealth of the Carolinas, “The AFL reunion was a way to bring people who have completed the program back together. A lot of these folks developed close friendships and the reunion was a way to re-energize everyone's commitment to his or her physical activity program. Each participant who wore a step counter to the reunion received an award and we gave special prizes to those with the highest steps for the day, as well as to those who had reached 10,000 steps. We also recognized our program ambassadors who encouraged their friends and neighbors to participate in the program.”

The Greater Detroit Area Health Council's (GDAHC) *Active for Life Detroit* honored the accomplishments of graduates and current participants on May 12, 2004 during a community-wide celebration event. “The audience ‘rocked with excitement’ from both testimonials of AFL-Detroit graduates who are more in charge of their life and the *Fired-up Couch Potatoes* demonstration of the *Power Sit* physical activity model,” said Karen Calhoun, vice-president for Community Health at GDAHC. “Recognizing individuals for achievement has a profound impact on motivational factors associated with active living.”

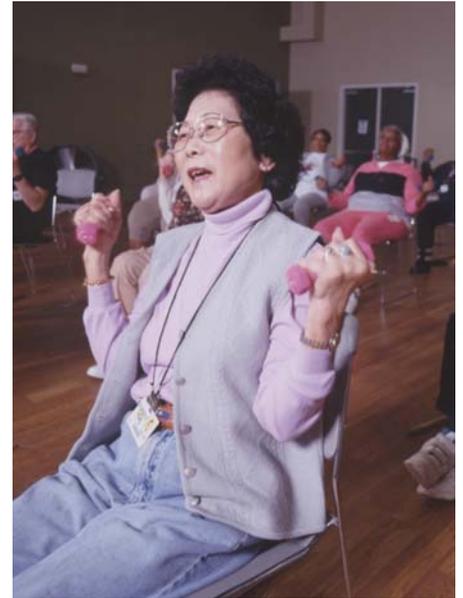
An AARP synthesis report on marketing research notes, “People view increasing physical activity as an extremely difficult and daunting task. The well-known Nike slogan, ‘Just do it,’ seems a cruel over-simplification to many people older than age 50.”

Older adults face a myriad of barriers to being more physically active. These can include the time constraints of juggling work, caregiving of a family member and other family commitments; physical challenges such as arthritis; and emotional concerns such as embarrassment about being out of shape or intimidation when around trim and fit younger people. Acknowledging these barriers, affirming people's efforts to become active, providing encouragement and support of efforts, and celebrating successes are vital to helping mature adults become and remain physically active.

## ***Church Health Center of Memphis collaborates with area organizations***

The Church Health Center (CHC) of Memphis, one of four Active for Life grantees implementing the *Active Choices* program, is partnering with three local YMCAs to expand access to Y services. The Memphis area Ys followed the CHC lead and now provide free walking as well as discounted monthly fees that parallel the CHC's Hope & Healing memberships for clinic patients and those who participate in the *Active Choices* physical activity program. "It's a great example of generous collaboration to help our community members get healthier," says Teresa Cutts, Ph.D., director of Program Development, Church Health Center.

Church Health also recently launched a *Faith in Motion* initiative with Christ Community Health Services (a faith-based clinic for the under-served). *Faith in Motion* will reach the most poverty- and obesity-stricken neighborhoods in Memphis. As part of the program, town hall meetings will be held this summer to look at physical activity initiatives that work in low-income neighborhoods (like informal sports or dance groups) and to discuss community barriers to physical activity. Dr. Cutts comments that the hope is that informal, as well as formal, grassroots programs might be used as springboards for tackling obesity.



***A Memphis resident enjoys the physical activity program at the Church Health Hope and Healing Center.***

## ***Upcoming meetings of interest***

**June 2-4, 2004. TIME/ABC News Summit on Obesity.** "Obesity is such an ugly word that many Americans who are obese shy away from discussing the problem," says Jim Kelly, managing editor of TIME magazine. "But getting over that shame is the first step in understanding the complex reasons why a growing number of Americans are seriously overweight. This conference is about offering solutions, not about finger wagging."

The TIME/ABC News Summit on Obesity is presented by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropic organization devoted exclusively to health and health care. "The number of obese adults in the United States has doubled over the past several decades, but the trends among our nation's children are even more alarming," says Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., president and CEO of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "If we don't do something to reverse these trends, we will raise the first generation of Americans to live sicker and die younger than their parents."

"Our intent in hosting the Summit on Obesity is to gather leaders who can discuss and propose solutions and help enact change. We are inviting CEOs from food, beverage, insurance, pharmaceutical and health-care companies; researchers and educators; physicians; nutritionists and fitness experts; government officials and policymakers; marketers; journalists; and concerned citizens," says Eileen Naughton, president of TIME magazine.



In addition to the Summit, TIME magazine and ABC News are planning special reports that will be published and aired the first week of June. Participating ABC News broadcasts include *Good Morning America*, *World News Tonight* and *Nightline*. Peter Jennings will anchor *World News Tonight* from the conference on Thursday, June 3. Additional reports and coverage will be provided by TIME.com and ABCNEWS.com, as well as by ABC News Radio and ABC News Live. For additional information, go to <http://www.time.com/time/2004/obesity>.

**July 11-14, 2004. Changing the Way We Do Business n4A's 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.** Atlanta GA. For information, go to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging Web site at <http://www.n4a.org/2004conf/atlanta2004.cfm>.

**July 23-25, 2004. Building Strong Networks and Coalitions.** Praxis will offer this session at the National Conference Center in Landsdowne, VA. The Praxis Project's residential trainings are designed for activists who view advocacy and policymaking as essential tools for improving their communities. Given the training area's focus on supporting concrete work, priority is given to those organizations that are in the planning or initial implementation phases of a local or statewide policy advocacy campaign. This program is made possible through support from TTAC, the Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. For more information see [http://www.thepraxisproject.org/learning\\_circle.html](http://www.thepraxisproject.org/learning_circle.html).

**August 12-15, 2004. Women of Color, Taking Action for a Healthier Life: Progress, Partnerships & Possibilities.** Minority Women's Health Conference sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health. <http://www.4woman.gov/mwhs/>.



### **Marketing Facts, Figures and Ideas**

#### ***Weight bearing exercises can help strengthen bones***

Regular physical activity has been associated with many positive health benefits, including strong bones, notes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Weight-bearing physical activities cause muscles and bones to work against gravity and thus increase their strength. Some examples of weight-bearing physical activities are walking, tennis or racquetball, stair climbing, jumping rope, dancing, hiking, and weight lifting.



Incorporating weight-bearing physical activity into an exercise plan is a great way to keep bones healthy. Some sobering statistics illustrate the deficient bone health of many Americans:

- According to the Arthritis Foundation, one in three American adults report an arthritic or chronic joint condition.
- One in two American women will be affected by osteoporosis.
- 40 percent of all women over the age of 50 years are expected to suffer at least one osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime.

## ***Physicians play an important role in encouraging patients to be active***

A new survey from the Merck Institute of Aging & Health shows that older Americans may not always receive adequate information on diet and exercise from their doctors. Some 42 percent of those surveyed say they would exercise more if their doctors told them what to do. For African-American respondents, the figure increased to 60 percent. To aid patient education, the Merck Institute offers physician toolkits designed to improve dialog between doctors and older adults. Available in English and Spanish, toolkits address memory loss, falls, incontinence and depression. They were developed by the American Geriatric Society's Practicing Physician Education Project. More information is available at [www.miahonline.org](http://www.miahonline.org).



### ***Tips, Tactics & Tools***

#### ***Free online strength-training program***

*Growing Stronger: Strength Training for Older Adults* is a free online strength-training program co-designed by Tufts University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program is based on scientific research involving exercises that have been shown to increase the strength of muscles; maintain the integrity of bones; and improve balance, coordination, and mobility. For more information, go to <http://nutrition.tufts.edu/research/growingstronger/>.

#### ***Walkable communities workshops***

The National Center for Bicycling & Walking (NCBW) is making its *Walkable Community Workshops (WCW)* series more broadly available to communities across the country. The WCW program has been offered exclusively through a proposal process involving Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) for the last two years. The NCBW wants to make the program more widely available to other agencies and community organizations. If your agency, community group, or MPO is interested in sponsoring a *Walkable Community Workshop* or in sponsoring a "train-the-trainer" session to develop a state or regional corps of WCW instructors, e-mail the NCBW at [info@bikewalk.org](mailto:info@bikewalk.org).

#### ***“Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options”***

A report by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (SSTP), *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options*, (available on the AFL Web site, [www.activeforlife.info](http://www.activeforlife.info), in the “Resources” section under “Reports.”), shows over half of non-drivers age 65 and older stay home on any given day. Many older Americans do not have options other than driving and less than one half of the population has adequate public transportation available to them. Walking is often difficult or unsafe and not an alternative. Street safety is cited as a major problem. In a recent poll, 42 percent of Americans reported that dangerous intersections make crossing the street difficult where they live.



## **In the News**

### ***Warm weather offers opportunities to encourage swimming and aquatic activity***

According to the *National Center on Physical Activity and Disability*, swimming is an excellent form of aerobic exercise. With the weather getting warmer, this may be an excellent option for mid-life and older adults. Some benefits of swimming and water activities include:

- Water buoyancy reduces stress on joints;
- Low-impact activity;
- An individual's weight while in the water is only about 10 percent of normal weight;
- Water provides resistance, which improves muscle strength;
- Improves balance and agility; and
- Improves confidence and comfort in and around water.

### ***Weight loss and exercise can help treat osteoarthritis***

A combination of moderate weight loss and exercise is an effective treatment for overweight adults with osteoarthritis of the knee, according to new research from Wake Forest University published in the May issue of the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatism*. "Considering that side effects often limit the use of drug therapy and surgical intervention is often ineffective for mild or moderate knee osteoarthritis, our results give strong support to the combination of exercise and weight loss as a cornerstone for the treatment of overweight osteoarthritis patients," said Stephen Messier, professor of health and exercise science and principal investigator of the study.

### ***Adjusting to summer heat and humidity***

People who participate in outdoor exercise should give themselves time to adjust to the increased heat and humidity of summer says William O. Roberts, president-elect of the American College of Sports Medicine. People who are not used to exercising outdoors in the heat and humidity risk developing exertional heat stroke, a condition that comes from doing activity during hot weather.

"With exertional heat stroke, people build body heat from the muscle work they're doing. When it's hot and humid, you can't evaporate your sweat," says Dr. Roberts and this contributes to heat becoming trapped in the body.

The best way to prevent this condition is for people to get used to warmer weather gradually and to know their heat tolerance, Dr. Roberts advises. People also need adequate hydration in hot weather, and should drink enough water to replace what they lose during activity. Dr. Roberts cautions people to stop their activity and find a cool place if they start to feel odd when exercising outdoors. Disorientation, muscle cramps and exhaustion are all symptoms of exertional heat stroke. For more information, see [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory\\_17279.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_17279.html).

### ***Volunteering brings benefits in physical as well as mental health***

Older adults who volunteer in troubled urban schools not only improve the educational experience of children, but realize meaningful improvements in their own mental and physical health, say researchers at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions. The Johns Hopkins investigators base their conclusion on the first randomized clinical trial testing the health benefits of participating in an established volunteer program called *Experience Corps*. The study is published in the April issue of the *Journal of Urban Health*.

"While our results are preliminary, what we found is a 'win-win' for everyone involved," says the study's lead author, Linda P. Fried, M.D., director of the Center on Aging and Health at Johns Hopkins. "Giving back to your community may slow the aging process in ways that lead to a higher quality of life in older adults," she adds.

"Physical, cognitive and social activity increased in volunteers, suggesting potential for *Experience Corps* and similar programs to improve health for an aging population, while simultaneously improving educational outcomes for children."

For more information, go to

[http://www.experiencecorps.org/media\\_center/releases/2004\\_4\\_07\\_JHU.html](http://www.experiencecorps.org/media_center/releases/2004_4_07_JHU.html).

### ***Social and physical activity can reduce depression***

Clinically significant depression affects 15 to 20 percent of elderly individuals in the United States. Older adults with social isolation, multiple illnesses, and physical impairment are more likely to be depressed but may be less able to seek appropriate care for depression compared with older adults without these characteristics. A home-based program that includes social and physical activity significantly reduces symptoms of depression in older adults who are chronically ill and have minor depression, according to a study by Dr. Paul Ciechanowski of the University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, and colleagues. The study was reported in the April 7 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

### ***Second annual "Walking City Competition"***

American Podiatric Medical Association, in conjunction with *Prevention*, studied the major U.S. cities and tabulated and weighed 20 criteria of interest to pedestrians, including crime, mass transit, air quality, and the number of historic sites, museums, and gyms in each city. Which cities rated best for walking? New York City, San Diego, Jersey City, Honolulu, and Madison (WI). For more information, see [www.apma.org/citywalks2004/index.html](http://www.apma.org/citywalks2004/index.html).

### ***New nutrition and physical activity journal***

The International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity launched a new journal titled *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*. All articles in the journal

are available online at no cost, and papers on the behavioral aspects of diet and physical activity are currently being accepted. For information, go to <http://www.ijbnpa.org/home/>.

### ***Exercise can help the immune system***

Older men and women who performed moderate resistance exercise at home 30 minutes a day, three times a week for 11 months, showed a significant increase in natural killer cell activity, the immune system's first line of defense against viral infection, according to a study by researchers at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. The sustained exercise may be the key, say the researchers, since earlier studies using shorter periods of up to three months did not find this significant increase in immune system activity with resistance training. In addition to enhanced immune response, the study participants also showed significant improvements in muscle strength and lipid profiles, with decreased total cholesterol and LDL concentrations. The study was reported at the scientific sessions of The American Physiological Society.

### ***Director selected for White House Conference on Aging***

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced that former Virginia Department on Aging Commissioner Ann Y. McGee, Ed.D., will serve as executive director for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. The White House Conference on Aging occurs once a decade in order to make policy recommendations to the President and Congress to assist the public and private sectors in promoting the dignity, health, independence, and economic security of current and future generations of older persons. Dr. McGee will oversee the planning of the conference. The conference will involve a policy committee with 17 members. The President will appoint nine members to the committee, including the chairman, and Congress will appoint the other eight members.

"This conference occurs as the first wave of the baby boom generation prepares for retirement, creating an important opportunity to creatively re-assess aging in America and improve the lives of older Americans," Secretary Thompson said.



### ***Wheelchairs on the Go: Accessible Fun in Florida***

*Wheelchairs on the Go* has been called one of the most comprehensive and best barrier-free travel guides ever. This 424-page book describes: (1) beaches with special wheelchairs to get across sand; (2) accessible bed and breakfasts, resorts, condos, camping, and RVs; (3) wheelchair seating at sports stadiums and theaters; (4) accessible fishing, sailing, boat tours, and pools; (5) ride-by-ride access to Disney World, Universal Studios and Busch Gardens; (6) access to tourist attractions, parks, zoos, and historic sites; and (7) accessible ground transportation resources for all people with disabilities.



## Grants and available resources

### ***Funding for community health promotion and disease prevention projects***

The Department of Health and Human Services has announced a new funding opportunity known as the *Steps to a HealthierUS: A Community-Focused Initiative to Reduce the Burden of Asthma, Diabetes and Obesity*. This initiative is designed to create healthier communities by improving the lives of Americans across the lifespan. Eligible applicants include: large city/urban communities, state-coordinated small city/rural communities, and tribal consortiums. The program will support community-wide projects that enable persons to adopt healthy lifestyles that contribute directly to the prevention, delay, and management of diabetes, asthma, and obesity, including projects focused on physical activity, nutrition and chronic disease self-management. The program provides partnership opportunities for a wide variety of agencies and organizations to work together at the community level to promote health and prevent chronic disease.

Letters of Intent (LOI) to apply for these awards are due by May 27, 2004. Full application is due by June 21, 2004.

For more information, go to [www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fedreg/frcont04.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/frcont04.html).

### ***Foundation giving trends***

The end of the three-year stock market downturn and stronger than expected economic growth helped to boost foundation assets by an estimated 9 to 11 percent in 2003, which will encourage increased giving in 2004. Overall, close to half of foundations responding to the Foundation Center's 2004 survey indicated that they expect their giving to increase in the current year - most within the range of 1 to 10 percent. Only 18 percent anticipate reduced giving. However, many foundations - especially the largest ones - have yet to fully recover from the drop in their assets during 2001 and 2002. Foundations can be expected to proceed cautiously in increasing their grants budgets, as war, terrorist attacks, election-year politics, a hike in oil prices, or other unanticipated events could derail the recovery. As a result, giving is likely to increase in 2004 but at a modest pace.

The *Active for Life*® E-Newsletter Update is produced monthly by the *Active for Life*® National Program Office at The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health. To include information, contact Brigid McHugh Sanner at [bsanner@comcast.net](mailto:bsanner@comcast.net) or call 214-553-0621. This program is funded by a grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation®.

