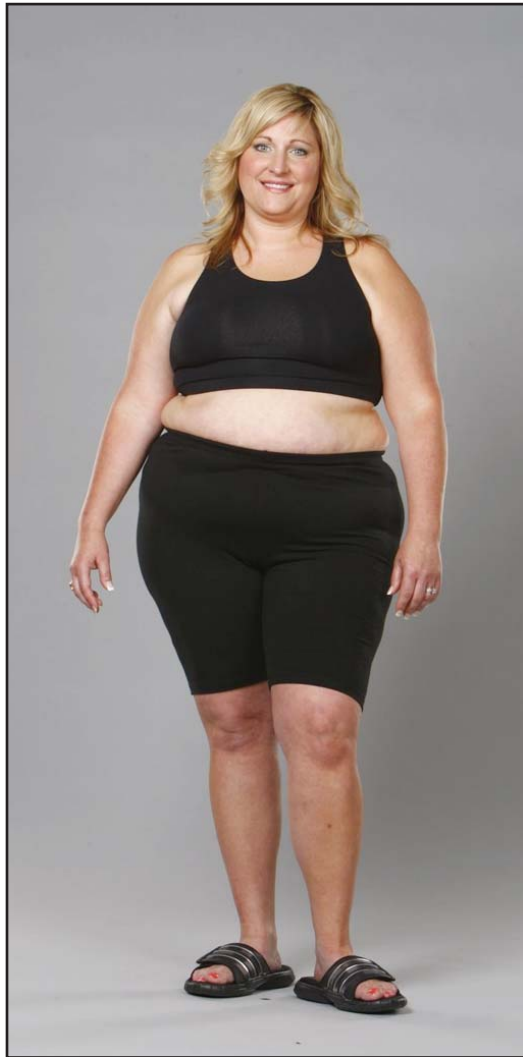
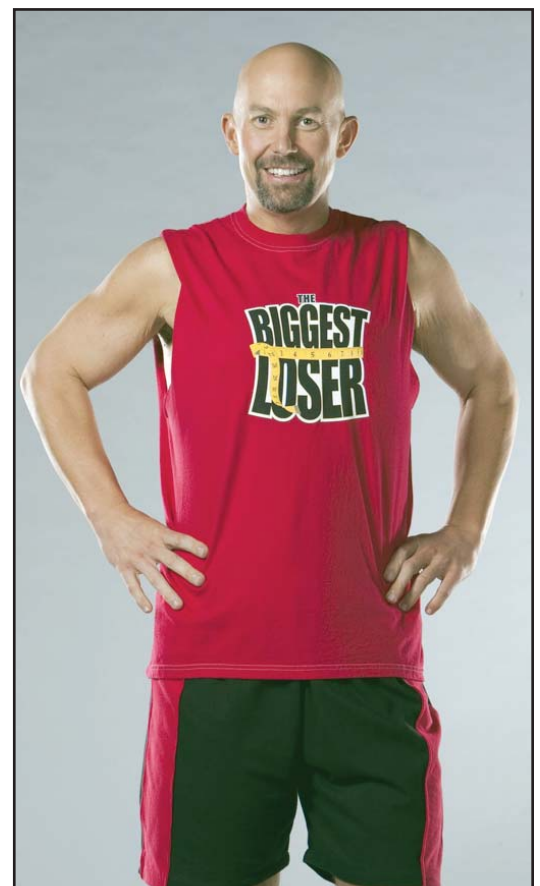


A New Year *A New You!*



Phil and Amy Parham to help Pickens County get in shape. See story, Page 2.

A Special Supplement to
The Easley Progress • The Pickens Sentinel
Powersville Post
January, 2011



Pickens County to help residents to 'Get Fit'

By Carla Whitlock
Pickens County Special Projects Coordinator

PICKENS COUNTY — What began as an idea to encourage Pickens County employees to live healthier lifestyles has grown into an event open to all Pickens County residents interested in learning more about healthy habits.

In cooperation with the Pickens County YMCA, County leaders will be sponsoring *Get Fit Pickens County Day* on Thursday, March 3 at Pickens First Baptist Church. The event will begin with a kick-off at 8:30 a.m. and will feature former *Biggest Loser* contestants Phil and Amy Parham and will continue with a health fair which will continue throughout the day. All events are free and open to both residents of Pickens County and employees of Pickens County companies.

According to Chap Hurst, Pickens County Administrator, the examination of rising health care costs was a factor in planning the event. "A major cause for concern over the last several years has been the rise of insurance and medical premiums for everyone. As we began to make plans for the event for our employees, we decided to open the event to all residents of the County to encourage them to be healthier in 2011 and possibly lower their risks of major ailments including heart disease and diabetes." He added "Our focus is to offer options for healthier lifestyles for everyone in Pickens County."

Sid Collins, CEO of the Pickens County YMCA said that he hopes the event will be a good start for many who would like to begin living a healthier life.

"Part of our mission at the Y is to encourage healthier communities and participating in this event is a perfect way to promote that message." Collins also added that the event will increase awareness of the need for exercise and nutrition in every Pickens County home. "We view health and wellness as an opportunity for families to participate together. With a number of hiking and walking trails in the area, Pickens County families have lots of options when it comes to exercise."

Pickens County leaders are also planning to involve the business community in the event.

"It is our hope that Pickens County businesses will encourage their employees to at-



Phil and Amy Parham

tend the kick-off and the health fair," Hurst said. "We will be working with businesses across the area to get the message out and to encourage them to be vendors at the event to promote their products and services."

The health fair will include blood glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure and bone density screenings for attendees. Grip strength and flexibility screenings will also be available. Representatives from the YMCA will also be on hand to measure body mass index and to recommend basic fitness plans to attendees.

Although the event is free and open to the public, registration for the kick-off is recommended. To register, e-mail name address and phone number to events@pickens.sc.us after January 31 or call (864) 898-5844.

All registered participants will be entered to win door prizes during the kick-off event. Any businesses interested in participating as a vendor during the health fair can contact Carla Whitlock, Special Projects Coordinator at czrlaw@co.picken.sc.us or (864) 898-5659.

"A major cause for concern over the last several years has been the rise of insurance and medical premiums for everyone."

Chap Hurst

Pickens County Administrator

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YMCA offers variety of aerobic classes

PICKENS COUNTY — The Pickens County YMCA offers a variety of aerobics classes to help you stay fit and work off pounds. Call the YMCA at 878-8380 or 855-9622 for times and schedules.

Classes offered include:

Classic/Multi-Step/Intermediate Step

Aerobic exercise that consists of stepping up and down on a 4" to 10" (adjustable) step. Movements are coordinated & choreographed to music. Class includes: 1) warm-up and aerobic stepping (40 - 45 minutes) and 2) muscle conditioning of upper and/or lower body, abdominal work, and cool-down (15 - 20 minutes). Modifications are offered to accommodate variable fitness levels. Intermediate offers more advanced choreography. Multi-Step uses more than one step per person.

Beginner Step

A class designed to teach the basics of STEP aerobics to the student who has no or very little experience w/STEP.

Step Sprint

A Classic Step Class interspersed with higher intensity moves such as jumping jacks, lunges, squats, sprints, etc.

Sports Conditionin Step

An athletic type class which utilizes calisthenics, sports simulations, STEP, & muscle conditioning. Suitable for all fitness levels.

Basic Yoga

A basic Yoga class for beginners & beyond...includes balance, stretching, strengthening, flexibility, & relaxation.

Mixed Level Yoga

A class suitable for most levels...includes traditional yoga poses, breathing technique, & focusing.

Pilates

A class which focuses on "core training", ie- using your abdominal & other trunk muscles to tone the whole body. Movements are slow & controlled & help develop strength, flexibility, & balance. For all ages & fitness levels.

Yogalates

A class that combines Basic Yoga & Pilates.

Group Personal Training

Receive individualized training, tips, & guidance to make exercise more effective for YOU in a group setting. You share your goals & the instructor will offer various exercise prescriptions including variations to meet the needs of each participant.

Super Sculpt

A muscle conditioning & strengthening

class that works every muscle in sets choreographed to music.

Uses weights and/or resistance bands & stability and/or medicine balls.

Boot Camp/Total Body

Cardio-intense classes that may include but are not limited to: High/Low, Kickboxing, Sprints, Step, Drills, & Weights. These classes use a wide variety of activities to boost your heart rate & burn calories!

20/20/20

Three varying modes of exercise to improve strength, flexibility, & balance.

Group Cycling

A class on a stationary bike set to music. Bikes are adjustable to various levels of difficulty. Beginners through advanced are welcome.

"Double Track" Group Cycling

A Group Cycling class as above that caters to Beginners through Intermediate. The instructor offers two different intensity options throughout class to personalize the work-out for individual participants.

Zumba/Cardio-Salsa

An aerobic exercise class based on Latin-inspired dance moves and/ or "Salsa". Easy to learn & fun to do!

Line Dancing/Movin' and Groovin'

A fun and exciting work-out. Uses varied music & many different dance moves. Perfect for all ages & fitness levels.

Line Dancng and Light Weights

Line Dancing followed by easy-to-do muscle conditioning... uses light weights for a well - rounded cardio & sculpt work-out.

Belly Dancing

Come work your core muscles in a fun and creative way. Learn to Belly Dance or practice what you already know (Women Only Please!) Seasonal.

Moms and Tots

A class for mothers & their 1 to 5 year olds! (Fathers, Grandparents & Babysitters w/ tots are welcome too!). Includes exercises, games, singing, & creative movement to music together.

Kids Get Fit/Girls Get Fit/Boys Get Fit

A seasonally offered class for children ages 8 to 12 years. Designed to introduce kids to the aspects of being healthy & fit. Offers a wide range of exercise activities to help develop & maintain the exercise habit & to promote a healthy self-esteem.

Silver Sneakers 1— Muscular Strength and Range of Movement

Have fun and move to the music through

a variety of exercises designed to increase muscular strength, range of movement, and activity for daily living skills. Hand-held weights, elastic tubing with handles, and a ball are offered for resistance, and a chair is used for seated and/or standing support.

SilverSneakers II – Cardio Circuit

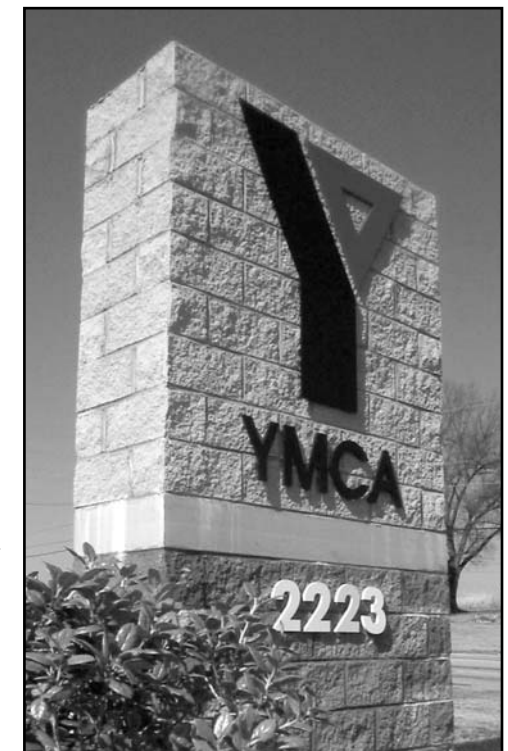
Combine fun with fitness to increase your cardiovascular and muscular endurance power with a standing circuit work-out. Upper-body strength work with hand-held weights, elastic tubing with handles, and a ball is alternated with non-impact aerobic choreography. A chair is offered for support, stretching, and relaxation exercises.

SilverSneakers YogaStretch

A beginning level class that offers stretching, balance, concentration, and relaxation. A chair is used for seated and/or standing support as needed.

Body Recall

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Cannon Hospital offers a variety of Wellness programs

By Jason Evans

PICKENS COUNTY — If you're looking to slim down and become more active this year, Cannon Memorial Hospital is a great ally to have in your corner.

The hospital offers a variety of programs each week and has many events planned throughout the year aimed at community wellness, according to Christy Lowe, Wellness Coordinator for Cannon Memorial Hospital.

"The first Wednesday of every month is Wellness Wednesday," she said. That event is held from 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 the first Wednesday of the month in Cannon's Acker Classroom.

"This time of year is a great time for people to have their numbers checked," Lowe said.

During Wellness Wednesdays, the hospital offers free blood pressure, bone density and height, weight and Body Mass Index screenings.

Determining your BMI can help you determine if your overweight or obese, which in turn can shape your weight loss goals.

A number of other tests are also available during Wellness Wednesdays for small fees, including a total cholesterol and glucose screening for \$10, a liver function test for \$10 and a lipid panel for \$22.

"A lot of people who don't have health care, even if they're trying to get a prescription renewed, a lot of times the doctor will want a lipid panel," Lowe said. "At Wellness Wednesday, you can get a lipid panel for only \$22. It's a good thing to offer people."

Some of the screenings offered at Wellness Wednesdays require fasting beforehand. Call 898-1333 for more information.

Cannon recently moved its fitness

program to the Pickens Recreation Center. Classes include aerobics with weights, step and yoga.

Cannon's Living Large class combines exercise with help of eating healthily.

"We do nutrition counseling along with that class," Lowe said. "You get the exercise course, along with the weigh in and the nutrition counseling for \$38 for the 8-week session. We think that's a good deal."

In addition to a number of fitness classes now offered at the Pickens Rec, those looking to get into better shape can walk the fitness trail at the Center or you can walk the fitness trail located at Cannon Memorial Hospital.

"It's a one-mile trail," Lowe said.

To access the trail, park at the back of the hospital. The trail offers challenging hills and also flatter ground.

"You can stay on the flatter ground until you build up your heart strength," Lowe said.

Cannon offers a variety of health fairs. They will host a Diabetes Health Fair Thursday, March 3 from 8 a.m. – 11 a.m. at the Pickens Recreation Center.

"For people with diabetes, that'll be a great chance to get a good bit of information on keeping your diabetes under control," Lowe said.

Cannon's Health Care Professionals, along with other diabetes professionals, will be on hand to answer questions about diabetes management, proper diet, cardiovascular and foot care.

In April, Cannon will sponsor a Community Health Fair at the Pickens Azalea Festival.

"We'll be offering a general health panel," Lowe said. "That's something that usually costs several hundred dollars. We'll be offering it for around \$60. That is a really

good deal."

Cannon also offers periodic blood pressure screenings at the Pickens Flea Market.

"It's amazing," she said. "We see a lot of people who have really high blood pressure and they don't even know it. We tell them, 'Get to your doctor.' People are about to have strokes. That's serious."

Lowe said the hospital plans to have blood pressure screenings at the flea market sometime this summer.

Cannon also offers a one-on-one weight loss program, Lowe said.

"It's based on healthy eating," she said.

"It's not a quick fix type thing."

"Most people don't know much about nutrition," Lowe said. "We help you set goals and help you reach those goals by making lifestyle changes."

The weight loss program is \$10 per appointment. To make an appointment, call Lowe at 898-1331.

Cannon also offers smoking cessation classes for those hoping to ditch the habit. Call 898-1333 for information on the next class sessions.

"Most people don't know much about nutrition. We help you set goals and help you reach those goals by making lifestyle changes."

Christy Lowe

Wellness Coordinator for Cannon Memorial Hospital

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Tone to the Bone – a great way to tone & define muscle. This is your "osteoporosis insurance" program!

Body Shop – exercise from a chair; this is a great way to increase flexibility & mobility.

Living Large – a gentle aerobic/fitness class for larger individuals (no "skinies" allowed)

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"It's amazing. We see a lot of people who have really high blood pressure and they don't even know it. We tell them, 'Get to your doctor.' People are about to have strokes. That's serious."

Christy Lowe

Wellness Coordinator for Cannon Memorial Hospital

5 tips for getting kids to eat healthy snacks

Snack-times are as important as meal-times to children's overall nutrition. You don't want your kids trading away healthy snacks for cupcakes every day of the week.

One out of every three children in America is overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control. That's almost 25 million kids with a risk of developing such ailments as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and more. It's time for parents to take charge and make changes.

"Unfortunately many snack foods that are

marketed to kids are high in saturated fats, sugar, salt and preservatives," says Edmond Sanctis, co-founder of Sahale Snacks, a producer of healthy, all-natural snack foods. "It's all about making healthy snacks fun and available," says Sanctis.

Set a good example

What you, as role models, eat really matters. If kids see you enjoying fruit, nuts, veggies and other healthful treats, they are more apt to follow your lead.

The night before you go to work, let your kids see you packing a smart snack,

such as dried fruit or nuts. Fill your water bottle, and then fill theirs in front of them before leaving in the morning for work or school.

Clean out the Cupboards

Keep your pantries and cupboards clear of sticky snacks loaded with bad saturated fats, processed sugars, preservatives and high sodium counts. Remember, if you don't buy something it can't make its way into your children's stomachs as an after-school snack! Take charge!

Load-Up on Good Stuff

Keep a bowl of fresh fruits and nuts on the counter at home. Refrigerate cut fruits and vegetables in small bags for easy snacks or opt for pre-packaged healthful snacks. But take heed: healthful shouldn't mean boring.

Go beyond simple trail mixes by trying the more interesting fruit-and-nut blends available today. Sahale Snacks, for example, offers appealing all-natural combinations, such as cashews with pomegranate and

vanilla, or a tasty blend of almonds with a dash of honey and sea salt. These healthful snacks are available in Wal-Mart, as well as many supermarkets and club stores.

Read Labels

Always read labels carefully before purchasing. How much is a serving and how many are in each package? Is it high in calories or sugar? How much fat is in each serving? Ingredients like organic evaporated cane juice make great alternatives to highly-processed sweeteners and chemicals.

Keep Trying

It may take several attempts before children will sample or develop a taste for some foods, especially healthful ones they may have heard other kids denigrating. Don't give up. And encourage family and friends to make fruits, nuts and vegetables available to your kids as snacks.

For more healthy snack ideas, visit www.sahalesnacks.com.

"Remember to mix things up by packing different fun, healthy snacks for your kids each day," says Sanctis.

Top tips for Heart Health Month

It's time to tend to matters of the heart, as February brings with it Valentine's Day and Heart Health Month. It's the perfect time for heart-healthy lifestyle choices that can help us enjoy longer lives with our loved ones.

Every 25 seconds somebody in America suffers from a coronary event, such as heart attacks or strokes. And heart disease has long been the leading cause of death in the nation.

It was this harsh reality that spurred the government to proclaim February "American Heart Month" in 1963.

Today, the good news, according to the Centers for Disease Control, is the chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by preventing and controlling factors that put people at greater risk.

- **Get Moving:** Start slow if you aren't in great shape. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Take a walk daily and gradually increase your pace. Be sure to consult your doctor before starting exercise regimens.

- **Limit Fats:** Fatty foods can be high in cholesterol and trans fats that can clog arteries and lead to heart disease. There are many smart food choices that can help.

Choose lean meats and poultry without skin. Eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol daily and reduce hydrogenated oils and trans fats. Opting for fruit instead of snack foods or candy is a great way to eat fewer fatty foods.

- **Embrace Antioxidants:** Foods and drinks rich in antioxidants can combat cellular damage that can lead to heart disease.


Apples, oranges, grapes and tea are some foods containing these nutrients. Red wine, in particular, has high concentrations of a super antioxidant called resveratrol that's found in the skin of grapes. Resveratrol is a natural substance that has garnered headlines worldwide due to its heart health and life-span enhancing effects.

But due to the intoxication effects and calories, drinking too much red wine can be harmful. That's why many are using supplements or drinks fortified with resveratrol. One beverage garnering attention is Modjo forLIFE, a drink loaded with vitamins, amino acids, antioxidants and five times the amount of resveratrol found in a liter of red wine. It was crafted based on research from Harvard Medical School and the Mayo Clinic, according to the beverage's creator, Victor H. Diaz, who founded Cellutions, an innovator in health supplements.

- **More Fiber, Less Salt:** Vegetables, fruits and grains are great sources of fiber that may help lower risk of heart disease. Salt can be harmful, so eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium daily. If you have hypertension, are middle-aged or African American, consume less than 1,500 mg of sodium daily, according to the CDC.

For more tips on heart health, visit the CDC at www.cdc.gov. "A few smart choices now can make a big difference. With this in mind, eating foods rich in antioxidants and drinking beverages with resveratrol can help trigger your natural defenses," says Diaz.

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Shortcuts for staying healthy

Most Americans aren't getting proper nutrition.

According to a new study by the Centers for Disease Control, less than 33 percent of U.S. adults are eating enough fruit, and less than 27 percent are getting their recommended daily vegetable servings. The average American diet contains many "empty" calories that can lead to obesity and even malnourishment due to lack of crucial nutrients, like fiber and calcium, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Food is the fuel our bodies need to keep them functioning properly. But even if your eating habits aren't perfect, there are many small changes and shortcuts that can make a big nutritional impact.

Get Good Bacteria

Yogurt with live and active cultures can help with digestive tract problems, such as stomach upset, constipation and diarrhea.

However, downing two to three cups of yogurt a day can be difficult, if not redundant.

Instead, many are choosing to take one to two probiotic supplements a day. In order to be effective, a probiotic should contain billions of live microflora and "good" bacteria.

The Powerful Little Red Fruit

Sixty percent of women experience urinary tract infections (UTIs), usually caused by the invasion of E. coli bacteria. While experts often recommend drinking cranberry juice, you'd need to drink about eight glasses a day to get the benefit from the cranberry. Since cranberry juice can be very tart and is often loaded with sugar and calories, drinking so much of it can be difficult.

Fortunately, you can now get all the benefits of eight glasses of cranberry juice and more in a new natural supplement, now available at stores without a prescription.

One tablespoon of Cystex Liquid Cranberry Complex with Proantinox packs the healthful benefits of eight glasses of cranberry juice without the bitter taste, sugar and calories. More than just cranberry concentrate, the clinically-proven formula is bolstered by other ingredients that support bladder health and help prevent recurring UTIs, and is lactose-, sugar- and gluten-free.

Kid-Friendly Fiber

According to new guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, a four-year-old child should consume 25 grams of fiber daily, while an 11-year-old boy needs at least 31 grams. However, parents often struggle to get kids to eat their vegetables and other high-fiber foods.

Clever substitutions can help do the trick. Children now have fiber supplements tailored to their small physiques and

finicky taste buds. For example, Pedia-Lax Fiber Gummies are a delicious, dentist-approved daily fiber supplement designed to help kids, ages 2-11, boost their fiber intake when they aren't eating enough fruits and vegetables. Three gummies per day add 6 grams of fiber to a child's daily diet, the equivalent of 21 spears of asparagus.

Something Fishy

If you don't like fish but want the benefit of omega-3 acids, which are believed to reduce the risk of heart disease and boost immune health, consider daily omega-3 supplements. For kids, a healthy alternative is flaxseed, which can be sprinkled into cereal, oatmeal or yogurt.

Each person's health and nutritional needs are different, so consult a healthcare professional before adding supplements to your family's diet.

You friends may be affecting your weight

Is obesity contagious? Can you catch it from your friends? And if you have skinny friends, can this help you lose weight?

According to new research this may, indeed, be the case.

Researchers at Harvard University say America's obesity epidemic won't plateau until at least 42 percent of adults are obese, according to mathematical modeling based on 40 years of research.

This new research, which recently was published in the journal "PLoS Computational Biology," runs counter to recent assertions by some experts that the obesity rate, which has been at 34 percent for the past five years, may have peaked. This figure doesn't take into account an additional 34 percent of American adults who are overweight but not obese, according to the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While studying the issue, the scientists also found that friends may be impacting each other's weight.

The Harvard scientists assert that the proliferation of adult obesity in recent decades may be due to social networks. They found that a non-obese American adult has a 2 percent chance of becoming obese in any given year, and that this number rises by 0.4 percentage points with each obese social

contact, meaning that five obese contacts doubles the risk of becoming obese.

This may be because ideas about food portions, exercise and what counts as a normal body size all seem to be influenced by the people to whom we're connected.

However, you don't need to get rid of friends to manage your weight. That's because researchers also found that when one person loses weight, other people around that person lose weight, too.

This domino effect can be used to one's advantage by involving friends and family in weight management:

- Get a gym buddy or walking partner and use the time to connect as well as exercise. There's nothing better than laughing while on the treadmill.

- Cook family meals instead of calorie-heavy ones for the family and a "diet" version for you. You're less likely to feel deprived and your family will benefit as well.

- Be willing to have open, non-judgmental conversations about your struggles and accomplishments in losing weight. Don't be afraid to tell friends and family members — in a gentle manner — what helps and what doesn't.

- If you're having trouble finding a support team, make new friends who are facing the same issues. Groups like Overeaters

Anonymous and WeightWatchers can provide the emotional support and camaraderie you need to achieve your weight-loss goals and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

If you're looking to support a loved one in his or her weight-loss program, try to avoid military-style "pep" talks or being critical in

any way. While such strategies may lead to short-term action, they also can lead to long-term esteem problems.

Accepting your loved ones as they are, while cheering their efforts to engage in healthy activities, is the biggest gift you can give them..



Outdoor play is key to kids' health

Go play outside! That's the message more parents and doctors need to tell kids, according to a new report indicating children are spending too much time indoors to the detriment of their physical and mental health.

From videogames and text messaging to Web surfing and TV-watching, American kids are spending too much time indoors, leading to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression and even Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Children today spend only four to seven minutes in daily unstructured outdoor play,

according to a new report issued by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), entitled "Whole Child: Developing Mind, Body and Spirit through Outdoor Play." Today's kids are indoors far more than their parents were, with only a quarter playing outside daily as compared to nearly three quarters a generation ago.

"American kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out because they're missing something essential to their health and development -- unstructured time outdoors," says NWF Senior Vice President of Educa-

tion Kevin Coyle. "The modern child's day includes far more screen time than green time."

According to Deputy U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Rutstein, this is a key factor in the childhood obesity epidemic and, if trends aren't reversed, may contribute to a generation with shorter lives plagued with disease. "If this problem is not addressed, we will leave our children a legacy of shorter life spans for the first time in history," he says.

For American parents who want their children to be fit, focused and feeling good, the first step is to walk out the front door. Here are some ideas from the NWF's report to get kids outdoors:

- Be a role model. Unplug from media and plug-in to nature. Join your kids for fun in the backyard, garden, park or on a nature trail.
- Enlist friends and neighbors to create outdoor playgroups.

• Get creative. Whether building a fort from twigs, creating a fairy forest or pretending to be superheroes, playing outside inspires active imaginations.

• Where safe, encourage kids to walk or bike to school.

• Take the pledge to "Be Out There" and get your kids outdoors. Visit www.beoutthere.org/pledge, which offers free downloadable outdoor activity suggestions.

• Get happy! Playing protects children's emotional development, letting kids be kids. Lying in the grass watching clouds go by or playing tag to let off steam keeps joy at the forefront. Watch stress levels fall within minutes of being outside.

• Doctors can help, too, by writing prescriptions for their young patients for regular outdoor play time.

For the full Whole Child report, and to learn more about raising a "Be Out There" kid, go to www.beoutthere.org

Now get out there and play!

Tips for managing stress

Stress is a part of daily life, even more so during tough times when dealing with a family crisis or struggling to pay the bills. And as stress increases, people are more likely to give up enjoyable activities that help keep stress at bay.

It doesn't have to be this way.

"There are many ways to deal with stress throughout the day," says Paul Huljich, writer and founder of the MWellA Community (Mind Wellness Awareness). Formerly an organic food pioneer worth over \$100 million dollars, he suffered a debilitating breakdown leading to hospitalization and a bipolar disorder diagnosis. He wound up losing his business, family and even dignity.

"My disorder was a direct result of the extreme stress I was under," he says. "But I now practice different stress-reducing techniques that have helped me live symptom-free for 10 years."

Self-Care is Mandatory

When the bills aren't paid, the car needs servicing and the groceries haven't been bought but the kids need to be fed, it's easy to put your needs at the bottom of your to-do list.

But by making rest and relaxation a priority, you give yourself time to revitalize and teach your kids valuable lessons in self-care and self-esteem.

Self-care can include different activities, from yoga and brisk walking to spiritual pursuits, like journaling, meditation or affirmations. It also includes getting enough sleep nightly, as most adults need a minimum of seven hours. It's also important to find ways to let go of past hurts.

Eat Well

A healthy diet is critical to immune and neurological functions, which in turn, help manage stress. Brain-healthy foods include nuts, fish, bananas and eggs, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables. Complex carbohydrates like brown rice and sweet potatoes are also beneficial.

Reach Out

Everyone needs to connect with other people, and quality time with family and friends can decrease your stress. However, sometimes we feel the need to talk with those who understand the specific nature of our problems. If so, consider looking outside your normal circles for support groups that address your needs.

One such group is the new MWellA online community, located at mwella.ning.com, which provides visitors with a place to reflect on where they are heading in life and share experiences. The site offers tips on reducing stress, along with the ability to participate in an online support group.

"Millions of people suffer from mental disorders. I felt it was my calling to build a community where people can find support and speak about their own struggles," says Huljich.

He also has written a fictionalized account of his battles in a new novel titled "Betrayal of Love and Freedom," which is intended to give hope to others seeking to triumph over mind conditions -- and to overcome the stigma of disease.

Most importantly, if you're struggling, be open to change. An open mind is a peaceful mind.

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