

## III. Community Action

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As a *Pick Your Path to Health* partner, you have a vital role in spreading the messages of this behavior-oriented and empowering women's educational health campaign.

This section on community action provides a small segment of possible community events you can implement, detailed explanations of five popular activities, and ideas for using National Women's Health Week as a launch pad for your *Pick Your Path to Health* events.

This is only a small portion of what can be done. Partners have the advantage of being in the community of the women and families they are targeting and may have unique and varied approaches and opportunities to pursue. We ask partners to share their campaign activities with us, as we are always looking for more ideas to give to other partners.

# Activity Ideas

Partners have many opportunities to help women in their communities achieve better health. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- PYPATH community health/screening fair
- PYPATH walkathon or bikeathon
- Monthly health workshops for women
- Health tips section in your community or organization's newsletter
- Mother's Day theme: sponsor/organize free mammograms for community moms/grandmothers during the week of Mother's Day
- Mother/daughter/granddaughter health events
- Valentine's Day theme: healthy heart potluck dinner for the women and their families
- Barbecues/picnics: focus on foods with low fat, low cholesterol, fresh ingredients
- Daily or weekly mall walks for seniors
- Church events—articles in church newsletter; organize a member health support group to discuss health issues and help women achieve health goals under PYPATH
- PYPATH health clubs: exercise, yoga, stretching, walk, dance, nutrition education for women
- Trips to local library to use Internet to log onto *Pick Your Path to Health* Web site
- Depression screenings
- Alcohol dependency/addiction screenings
- Self-defense classes
- Have women trace their family history and tradition and share with children/grandchildren and community
- Distribute campaign PYPATH materials
- Sign up women on the PYPATH listserv for weekly e-mail messages
- Class on nutrition led by a nutritionist
- Alcohol-free club for women: recovering alcoholics and alcohol education
- Contests for best ideas on making easy health improvements (specific topics: sexual responsibility, weight management, good mental health, ideas on how to successfully stop smoking). Give prizes.
- Community project to design and make a mural, sign, collage, painting, etc., on a particular PYPATH health theme and see if you can get it displayed in your community (grocery store, library, community center)
- Collect stories and ideas from women in the community or from groups that you belong to on what they have tried and were successful at in improving their health and combine their successes and ideas into a collection and make a book, take pictures to go along with it. Have it on display, make photocopies for everyone
- Community lectures on violence prevention, stress reduction, importance of immunization, or any other campaign topic

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### 1. Health Fairs

A *Pick Your Path to Health* fair is an ideal local community event that can give campaign partners an opportunity to reach out to women and their families about their health and well-being. The health fair can focus specifically on the 12 *Pick Your Path to Health* (PYPTH) themes, making it a forum for education, prevention, and learning about the resources available to them in the community.

A health fair can include exhibits, mini-workshops, demonstrations, screenings, and so on. It is easy to organize if you allow enough time for planning, follow a step-by-step approach, and develop a network of sponsors or organizations interested in promoting health issues.

The first step in organizing a community health fair is planning for it.

#### Early planning

#### 1. Begin organizing at least 4 to 10 months before the fair.

Give yourself as much preparation time as possible. This will ensure that you will cover all the aspects that are needed and anticipate and resolve any potential challenges that may arise.

- Decide on a date when you'd like to have the fair (and count back 4 to 10 months to begin planning). Make sure the date doesn't conflict with other events or circumstances that would limit people from attending.
- Things to consider: Weather, time of year, other events going on at the same time, best time of day to draw the largest number of people.

#### 2. Establish a planning committee.

A planning committee is needed to help cover all aspects for your PYPTH health fair. Having a committee will help reduce the amount of time needed to organize and make it a team effort. A planning committee can consist of your organization's staff, members, volunteers, and if possible, people in the community you are hoping to attract to the health fair.

Include people from the community or the audience you are targeting because you can get their perspective on what would likely attract them, not attract them, or prevent them from attending the fair, as well as other critical information. Here are other key issues to for a planning committee to consider.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

- Goals/Audience: What is your goal and who is your audience? The goal for the PYPH health fair could be to help women improve their health and the health of their families. The intended audience could be the women in your community within a 5-10 mile radius. For a PYPH health fair, you can focus on all or some of the 12 campaign health themes. Your specific goal can be to educate and encourage women to improve their health. Whatever your goal and intended audience, make sure you reflect back on what that is when making choices.
- Budget: How much money will it cost to have a fair? You will want to do some preliminary budget estimates. Make phone calls or inquiries to find out how much certain aspects will cost. Make a list of the components of a health fair that your organization will need to consider. These are some standard components you can start with and add additional ones that may be unique to your group.
  - Health fair site
  - Permits
  - Insurance
  - Materials (remember, the National Women's Health Information Center has a lot of free health information you can request either by phone 1-800-994-9662 or download from their Web site [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov), or you can request materials using the Materials Order Form in the back of this notebook).
  - Advertisement (printing costs, flyers, newspaper ads, signs, posters, and so on)
  - Equipment (table, chairs, tents, special equipment)
  - Entertainment (music, clowns, something fun for children)
  - Refreshments
  - Postage
  - Prizes or giveaways

Keep in mind that if you get volunteers or sponsors to help you, this can help offset or eliminate some costs. For example, you may get a sponsor to pay for printing costs, to donate refreshments, or to donate a space for the fair. Try to consider all your alternatives when thinking about and preparing the budget.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### Sponsors

Sponsors (local businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, pharmacies, health food stores, newspapers, child care centers, individuals, community groups, print/photocopy shop, banks, churches, etc.) can be invaluable resources to helping you organize and support your health fair.

Contact these potential sponsors to let them know about the background of the PYPTH campaign and your involvement in organizing a health fair. Ask if they can assist you with various needs associated with the health fair: printing, donating paper, providing food and beverages, advertising in their businesses, promoting the fair in their newsletter or newspaper, or donating a space or equipment for the fair. In return, you can give them recognition by publicly acknowledging their assistance at the fair or through your promotional efforts. Have a “wish list” of all the things that you need before recruiting sponsors.

Getting local businesses and leaders to help is a good way to promote community involvement. Everyone shares in the development and in the benefits.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to any community event. Volunteers can be individuals, members of your organization, or members from other businesses or groups that can help with the fair by donating their time and effort.

Volunteers can make phone calls, create flyers or posters and other advertisement materials, and make logistical arrangements. At the actual fair, volunteers can help set up and break down booths and exhibits, staff exhibits, or direct attendees to parking, registration, restrooms, or particular booths.

Make sure your volunteers feel appreciated and needed by valuing their contribution. It is a good idea to give them perks (refreshments, giveaways, public recognition, etc.).

### Exhibits

A health fair is an excellent opportunity for exhibits. You could invite various health organizations to exhibit and share information with your attendees. Invite national organizations, the local or state health department, community groups, libraries, or individuals that represent each of the 12 *Pick Your Path to Health*

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

themes and have a table or booth dedicated to each theme. Exhibits are a wonderful vehicle for fact sheets and educational materials to be distributed.

Screenings: You may also want to have health screenings as part of your exhibits (for example, blood pressure, cholesterol, flu, or pneumonia shots). Again check with your local health department to see what the regulations and requirements are associated with these screenings. Screenings are a great way to get attendees to focus on their health immediately and they can walk away knowing some information about their health. You have to also consider privacy issues. Certain types of screening may require private booths or private rooms. Make sure you have qualified screeners, proper paperwork, and a system for following up with attendees who have abnormal screening results—refer them to local health professionals. Have a referral letter with recommendations ready.

Exhibitors: Besides health professionals and health organizations, you may consider having other exhibitors as well—local businesses, companies, or individuals. Exhibitors could provide refreshments, entertainment, and so on. Make sure their companies represent or do not conflict with the health messages you want to convey. Consider whether to charge for exhibitors and how much. This can help offset some logistical costs.

### Logistics

Logistics covers the where, when, what, and how.

- Location: Where will the fair be held? It should be a location large enough to hold more than the expected number of attendees. A space for 500 people requires at least 2,500 square feet. Where it will be held will also depend on when the fair will be held. What kind of weather will it mostly like be? Is it preferable to have it inside or outside? A public, easily accessible place will attract more attendees.
- Date: Timing is everything. Give yourself at least 4-10 months planning time. Choose a date that doesn't conflict with other large events or that will deter people from coming. Weekends are definitely more accommodating for people.
- Permits/License: Check with your local government office to see whether you need any kind of permit (sign, structural, sanitary, entertainment, food service, etc.).
- Equipment: Will you need to rent any kind of equipment (e.g., tents, chairs, tables, portable bathrooms, medical screening equipment)? When you're deciding on what you'll be doing at the health fair, be it screenings, purely

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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education, or a mixture of both, the kinds of equipment you will need should be a part of your logistical planning. Make sure you have a first aid station in case someone needs minor medical attention.

### **Promotion**

Getting the word out about your health fair is perhaps the most important ingredient in determining how successful it will be.

Making sure people know about it ahead of time and have clear details on what the fair is about, what makes it special, and the date, time, and place are essential.

Make sure you have a contact person and phone number for the public to call in case they have any questions.

Sponsors can definitely come in handy with promotion by either helping to do so or helping with the cost of it. Flyers, posters, newspaper ads, radio announcements, or television ads are good ways to get the word out about the health fair to the community. Many radio stations or local television networks will give free airtime to community events.

For in-depth information on how to create and distribute a public service announcement or press release and specific examples for a health fair, refer to Section IV—Working with the Media. Don't forget about the tried and true method of posters and flyers in the neighborhoods and in community business storefronts or bulletin boards.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### 2. Monthly Workshops

If you are interested in working one-on-one with individual women or with a small group of women to help them on their path to better health, consider organizing and holding a series of workshops or classes based on the 12 *Pick Your Path to Health* themes.

How you structure the workshops and the topics you cover can vary. You may want to focus on one particular health theme, such as weight management. In this particular case, your workshops can cover nutrition, food preparation, exercise, weight management techniques, stress reduction, and other related components.

#### Planning

Workshops can be an effective and personal way to help women set and achieve health goals. The first step in holding workshops is basic planning. You need to consider: your goals, your intended audience, the logistics (where will the workshops be held and when, how they will be organized), what materials you will need, and how to get women to attend.

In Section V—Campaign Materials and Resources, there is a list of sample activities for workshops that provide suggestions under each *Pick Your Path to Health* theme.

#### Goals

Consider the following when planning your workshops.

- What do you want the women to get out of these workshops?
- Will the workshops be purely instructional?
- Will they be workshops where the women are actively participating? How will the success of the workshops be determined?
- Will you cover all 12 health themes, only a few, or concentrate on one?

#### Audience

Make sure your workshops are suitable for your intended audience. Depending on the women you would like to attract, you may want to try different approaches for conducting the workshops or promoting them.

- What is the age group of the women?
- Will the workshops be purely for women or for women and their families?



# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### Logistics

- **Where:** Where will the workshops be held? Is the facility/room large enough to hold the intended audience? Is the place convenient for attendees?
- **When:** When will they be held? Are they at a time convenient for most attendees? We call them monthly workshops, but that is just a suggestion. They can be weekly, daily, or whatever will best fit your goals and the goals of the women in your community.
- **What:** What will the workshops consist of? What kinds of activities do you want to have? How can you assure the most participation?
- **Who:** Who will conduct the workshops? Will you have speakers or guests? Can you count on sponsors or community groups to participate?
- **Materials:** All workshops need materials. These can include fact sheets, goal sheets, or resource lists. These are all included in this kit for you to use. Section V lists various agencies, including the Office on Women's Health ([www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov)) and resources that have publications for you to download or order for use in your workshops. Please take a look at the wealth of information and materials available to assist you.

### Sponsors/Volunteers

Sponsors can assist you by donating space for workshops or by being a guest speaker or assisting with setting up special activities in a workshop. Let businesses in your community know about the PYPH campaign and how you would like them to support you. You may want sponsors to help with advertising and contributing to printing costs or actually doing the printing of flyers or ads.

Volunteers can help you set up the workshop or they can get professionals to come in and do a workshop on a specific health issue with your group.

### Promotion

For information on how to create and distribute a public service announcement or press release, and specific examples for workshops, refer to Section IV—Working with the Media. Posters and flyers in neighborhoods and community business storefronts or on bulletin boards are good ways to get the word out.

Make sure you have a contact person and phone number for the public to call in case they have any questions.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

The following are suggestions or ideas that you may want to incorporate into your workshops around the *Pick Your Path to Health* themes. These are just a few suggested activities—the possibilities are endless.

### **January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.**

- Ask the women to come up with a creative or unique way to show how they find the strength within and share it with their group members.
- Ask chaplains at local hospitals, universities, and military bases to participate in a free seminar on "Women's Health and Spirituality."
- Hire a yoga instructor for an introductory session.
- Plan programs on meditation or other activities that reduce stress.
- Have the women keep a journal in which they take some time each day or each week to reflect and write down what they've done to embrace their spirituality.

### **February—Weight Management: Vital for long-term wellness.**

- Sponsor a potluck meal where each member brings a healthy dish or item to share.
- Start a listserv and e-mail weekly menus and words of encouragement to participants.
- Have a nutrition expert give a workshop on food: serving sizes, low-fat alternatives to different foods, options for eating out, how to cook foods in different ways, how to choose fresh, ripe food. Plan a field trip to a local farmers' market to discover fresh foods never considered.
- Take a field trip to the grocery store to shop or give guidance on healthy, low cost shopping, giving particular emphasis on what to buy or not buy for particular health conditions (diabetes, high blood pressure, and so on.)

### **March—Physical Activity: Stay Active. Live Longer.**

- Offer a "healthy heart" aerobics or stretch class to women through a local gym.
- Start a "women's walkers club."
- Sponsor a women's community sports team.
- Invite a fitness expert to speak about the importance of: hydration, injury prevention, strength training for women, and alternatives and suggestions for using common household items as free weights.

### **April—Alcohol Use: Know your limits.**

- Invite a speaker from a service/support organization to speak on the effects of alcohol on the body, signs of alcoholism, where to get family support, and resources in the community.
- Incorporate techniques on stress reduction as part of activity.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

- Have a contest for the most creative non-alcoholic drink. Have a group where everyone would make theirs and have the group judge which is the best for a prize.

### **May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.**

- Establish a support group for women that focuses on stress.
- Conduct depression screenings for a group of women and give continued support.
- Provide literature on mental health topics.
- Have massage students or professionals give instruction on how to give massages; have women get a seated massage.

### **June—Responsible Sexual Behavior: Think before you act.**

- Provide information on contraceptives and safe sex.
- Have a nurse practitioner or other health professional speak on what to expect at a gynecological exam and walk participants through the process of a mammogram and Pap smear, what each exam means, the results, etc.
- Have an expert talk about STDs and HIV—prevention and explaining signs of infection.
- Have the group create a community campaign aimed at teens and young adults on the benefits of safe sex.

### **July—Drug Abuse: Use and you lose.**

- Invite a drug abuse support organization speaker to talk with group on services and supports in the community, signs of drug addiction, and what to do if you live with someone who has a drug problem.
- Have a medical expert talk about the proper use and dangers of prescription drugs and what to ask your doctor about your prescriptions.
- Identify what family supports are available.

### **August—Health Care Access: Your health matters.**

- Hold or connect group members with a women's health fair.
- Invite insurance companies to sponsor a general "benefits workshop" on what to look for in a health plan, what kind of coverage is right for your family, etc.
- Have a physician speak on how to find the right primary care physician, including the questions to ask. Make sure the physician is of the same cultural background as the women, if possible.

### **September—Prevention: It's better than cure.**

- Partner with a women's clinic to offer free or low-cost immunizations.
- Hold an informational workshop on adult immunizations.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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- Hold an immunization recordkeeping group where everyone creates an immunization folder/chart that identifies all their immunizations and identifies ones they currently need.
- Identify community health screenings—diabetes screening, cholesterol, and so on.

### ***October—Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.***

- Encourage volunteer participation at local women's shelter.
- Sponsor an "open house" at your organization with representatives from local women's shelters and help publicize their services.
- Have each participant write up their emergency plan to leave a violent situation.
- Have women identify or begin to set up a support system for themselves.

### ***November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.***

- Start a smokers support group to give support to members who want to quit.
- Hold an educational seminar on secondhand smoke.
- Have group keep track of number of cigarettes smoked in a week and tally up cost; then come up with ways they could spend the money saved by not smoking, and go for it.

### ***December—Family: Get support from those who care.***

- Offer story-telling sessions where older members of the family share stories with community members and ask the local cable access television station to film it.
- Organize a family picnic day in your group of women.
- Have the group create a family tree and look into their family history to share with their children.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### 3. Exhibit/Display Tables

Exhibit tables can be a low-cost but highly effective means to display educational materials related to the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign. It doesn't take much to set up, the table doesn't have to be staffed, and you can reach women in various settings in the community.

#### Ideas for Exhibit Tables Locations:

- Libraries
- Day care centers
- Churches
- Community centers
- Fairs or expos
- Schools/Universities
- Bookstores
- Health care centers
- Doctor's office
- Community markets or grocery stores

Your display can include all 12 health themes of the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign, or just focus on one. You may want your display to coincide with a particular event or monthly observation. For example, February is "American Heart" month. February is also the campaign's "Weight Management" month. For February you may want to have an exhibit/display table with information on how to have a healthy heart and maintain your weight with brochures, fact sheets, and other written resources on nutrition, exercise, smoking, and cholesterol health.

If a table is not appropriate, you can post a flyer or fact sheet on bulletin boards at grocery stores, bookstores, or local businesses. Once you get the attention of the women in your community, you have contributed to getting the campaign's message across and helped women on the path to better health.

Make sure you have a contact person and phone number on materials for the public to call in case they have any questions.

#### Types of Materials:

Your exhibit can display a variety of campaign materials. You can display the campaign's poster, have pocket planners available, listserv cards, fact sheets on the campaign and various health themes, and you can download or order a wide variety of material from the Office on Women's Health Web site, [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov), the *Pick Your Path to Health* Web site, [www.4woman.gov/pypth](http://www.4woman.gov/pypth), or by calling 1-800-994-WOMAN (9662).

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### 4. Walk/Bike/Stroller Events

Walks, runs, and biking events are probably the most popular types of community events. Almost every national health organization sponsors a walk or run, drawing hundreds to thousands of people each year to raise awareness to their cause.

These events can be on a small, medium, or large scale. They are flexible in event distance, what time of year they can be held, and they can be done to raise awareness with or without pledge money attached to them.

Walkathons (or using bikes or strollers) are popular because they are:

- Good way to encourage good health habits
- Appropriate for all age groups
- Convenient – usually held on a weekend
- Inexpensive to organize
- Appealing to businesses and corporations to become sponsors

#### Goal/message

The first step in planning is to decide what your event is for. What is the cause? Is the goal to raise awareness? Will there be a pledge associated with it? Depending on your type of organization, the money raised for the event should reflect your organization's goals and the goal of better women's health.

*Example 1:* Day care center. You may want to organize a stroller-athon where mothers can bring their children with them, including those who still ride in strollers. The message could be: A Mother's Stroll for Health—working mothers need to take care of their health (for themselves and their children). You could collaborate with other area day care centers to get the most participants.

*Example 2:* Local health clinic. You may want to organize a walk to raise awareness about the importance of immunizations.

#### Establish a planning committee.

A planning committee is needed to help cover all event aspects. Having a committee will help distribute the amount of time needed to organize and to make it a team effort. A planning committee can consist of your organization's staff, members, volunteers, and if at all possible, people in the community you are hoping to attract to the event.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

It is important to include someone from the community or the audience you are targeting because you can get their perspective on what would or wouldn't encourage them to attend the walk. Here are other key issues for a planning committee to consider.

- Goals/Audience: Again, what is your goal and who is your audience? Whatever your goal and intended audience, make sure you reflect back on what that is when making choices.
- Budget: How much money will it cost to have a fair? You will want to do some preliminary budget estimates. Make phone calls and inquiries to find out how much certain aspects will cost. Make a list of the components of a health fair your organization will need to consider. These are some standard components you can start with and add additional ones that may be unique to your group:
  - Walk/run/bike route
  - Permits
  - Police assistance
  - Insurance
  - Materials (remember, the National Women's Health Information Center has a lot of free health information you can request either by phone or download from their Web site: 1-800-994-9662 or [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov), or you can request materials using Materials Order Form in this notebook).
  - Advertisement (printing costs, flyers, newspaper ads, signs, posters, and so on)
  - Equipment (table, chairs, tents, special equipment, first aid station)
  - Entertainment
  - Refreshments
  - Postage
  - Prizes or giveaways

Keep in mind that if you get volunteers or sponsors to help you, this can help offset or eliminate some costs. For example, you may get a sponsor to pay for printing costs, donate refreshments, or donate prizes. Try to consider all your alternatives when thinking about and preparing the budget.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### Sponsors

Sponsors (local businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, pharmacies, health food stores, newspapers, child care centers, individuals, community groups, print/photocopy shop, banks, churches, etc.) can be invaluable resources to helping you organize and support your walk/run/bike event.

Contact these potential sponsors to let them know about the background of the PYPH campaign and your involvement in the walk. Ask if they can assist you with various needs associated with the walk: printing, donating paper, providing free food and beverages, advertising in their businesses, promoting the walk in their newsletter or newspaper, or pledging a donation. In return, you can give them recognition by publicly acknowledging their assistance at the walk or through your promotional efforts. Have a “wish list” of all the things that you need before recruiting sponsors.

Getting local businesses and leaders to help is a good way to promote community involvement. Everyone shares in the development and in the benefits.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to any community event. Volunteers can be individuals, members of your organization, or members from other businesses or groups that can help with the fair by donating their time and efforts.

Volunteers can make phone calls, create flyers or posters and other advertisement materials, and make logistical arrangements. At the actual event, volunteers can help set up and break down registration tables, staff points along the walk route, direct attendees to registration, refreshments, or restrooms.

Make sure your volunteers feel appreciated and needed by valuing their contribution. It is a good idea to give them perks (refreshments, giveaways, public recognition, etc.).

### Logistics

- Location: What will be the route of the walk/run/bike event? How long will it be? Make sure it is an easy route to cover. Have a dry run of the walk to anticipate any difficulties. Mark the distance of the walk right before the event. Station volunteers at certain checkpoints along the route to check on participants. Make sure there is good access to the route for access by emergency vehicles, etc.
- Date: Timing is everything. Give yourself at least 4-10 months planning time. Choose a date that doesn't conflict with other large events or that will deter people from coming. Weekends are definitely more accommodating for people.



# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

- Permits/License: Check with your local government office to see whether you need any kind of permit (sign, street closure, structural, sanitary, entertainment, food service, etc.)
- Equipment: Will you need to rent any kind of equipment? For example, chairs, registration tables, portable bathrooms? Make sure you have a first aid station in case someone needs minor medical attention.
- Prizes/giveaways: Prizes and giveaways are a must for this kind of event—some sort of thank you for walkers that participate. You could also give prizes for the person who finishes first or who collects the most money.

### Promotion

Getting the word out about your walk is perhaps the most important ingredient in determining how successful it will be.

Making sure people know about it ahead of time and have clear details on what the fair is about, what makes it special—the goal, date, time, and place, as well as if there is a fee or if they can get pledges is essential.

Make sure you have a contact person and phone number for the public to call in case they have any questions.

Sponsors can definitely come in handy with promotion by either helping to do so or helping with the cost of it. Flyers, posters, newspaper ads, radio announcements, or television ads are good ways to get the word out. Many radio stations or local television networks will give free airtime to community events.

For in-depth information on how to create and distribute a public service announcement or press release and specific examples for a walk, refer to Section IV—Working With the Media. Don't forget about the tried and true method of posters and flyers in the neighborhoods and in community business storefronts or bulletin boards.

On the following pages is a case study of a successful walking program developed to get people to exercise. It is an example of how partnerships within a community can work together to make a difference and inspire people to make positive changes in their lives.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### “WALK ACROSS TEXAS”

#### Overview

Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas County, approached the Office on Women’s Health (OWH) in August 2002 and requested DHHS/SSA participation in their program, which was to take place county-wide from September 8 to November 2, 2002. One of the objectives of Healthy People 2010 is a focus on the Federal employee community, and the “Walk Across Texas” program fit into the OWH workplan to bring awareness and improve the health of Federal employees. The Office on Women’s Health took the lead on the project from the Federal end and with the Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas County Office to launch the event in early September.

“Walk Across Texas” was an eight-week *simulated* program for teams of eight people, aimed at “walking” 800 miles across the state of Texas, from Marshall to El Paso. The breakdown was approximately 12 miles for each person, each week, for eight weeks. It was NOT a walkathon or a fundraising event. **It was a free program with one simple focus...to get people to exercise.** Individual team members did not have to walk together, but rather, they kept track of their individual miles and reported those miles once a week to their team captain. The team captain, in turn, registered and inputted his/her team miles onto the program’s official Web site ([www.walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu](http://www.walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu)). The Federal group was one of many organizations throughout the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex that participated in this program. Other groups included a 4-H Club, Parkland Hospital, and Presbyterian Hospital.

#### Purpose

- Create a forum that encourages Federal employees to exercise
- Make exercise an integral part of participant’s daily routines
- Motivate and inspire participants to do something good for themselves and their health

#### Tactics

- Create teams of eight members to collectively “walk” across Texas over the course of eight weeks
- Motivate participants through a series of media events (newsletter, healthy cooking demonstrations, etc.)
- Award accomplishments

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### Initiatives

**Launch Event:** On September 4, 2002, Texas Cooperative Extension and the Office on Women's Health, Region VI hosted a launch event in the Federal common area during the lunch hour (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.). During the "Walk Across Texas" launch, we signed DHHS and SSA employees up to participate in the program, explained the process and gave each signee a healthy treat including an apple or orange, a Yoplait yogurt (brought in by Texas Cooperative Extension), and a red, white, and blue baseball cap. A representative from Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas County also put on a healthy cooking demonstration of easy-to-make recipes and gave tips on nutritious eating habits.

**Weekly Newsletter:** Each week, the representative from Texas Cooperative Extension, Dallas County, distributed a newsletter to all organization site managers (a single point of contact). The site managers distributed the newsletter to all the team captains within their organization and, in turn, the team captains distributed it to their team members. The newsletter updated participants on how everyone was doing collectively by reporting miles walked and pounds lost. It also contained information about nutrition and exercise, along with healthy recipes and motivational remarks.

**Federal Employee Tracking Chart:** To inspire some friendly competition, the Federal employee site manager posted a chart listing DHHS and SSA teams. Each team was asked to come up with a team name and mascot (e.g., Thundering Mustangs/Horse, SSA Roadrunners/ Roadrunner, DynoWalkers/Dinosaur). Each team captain and team name was represented on this chart, which was posted in the Federal common area. The team captains were asked, in addition to reporting their team's miles on the Web site, to also report them to the Federal site manager. The site managers posted the miles on a weekly basis so that all the participants could see their team's progress in comparison with other DHHS/SSA teams.

**Healthy Holiday Extravaganza:** In an effort to reward everyone's enthusiastic participation in the "Walk Across Texas" program and address the issue of weight gain during the holiday season, Texas Cooperative Extension and Office on Women's Health organized a Health Holiday Extravaganza for the Federal employees. The special event recognized all participants by handing out certificates, with special recognition given to those that went "above and beyond." The event also included healthy holiday cooking demonstrations, tips for reducing stress during the holiday season, and results on how the Federal employees did in comparison with other teams throughout Dallas County.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### Results

In total, 124 teams (992 people) participated in the “Walk Across Texas” program throughout Dallas County. There were 16 Federal teams (128 people) comprised of DHHS and SSA employees. Out of the 124 teams that took part, three Federal teams placed in the top 10, specifically 4th, 5th, and 10th places. Most teams did not report pounds lost, since it was an optional category. However, of those who did report this category, 886 pounds were lost county-wide during the course of the program. The Health Holiday Extravaganza was also very successful and a wonderful conclusion to the program. Sixty-five people attended and filled out evaluations, which went directly to Texas Cooperative Extension as feedback for next year.

### Challenges

Since so many people were participating in the “Walk Across Texas” program, Texas Cooperative Extension wanted to track mileage on their newly designed Web site. However, there were some minor “kinks” with some captains initially logging on and a lengthy registration form that made the site inconvenient and impractical. Feedback about the site will be used to further develop the site for next year.

Another challenge was getting members to report their miles in a timely manner to their team captains. Due to travel schedules, leave time, and other issues, some members would delay reports to their designated captain for up to 3 weeks, which would make the progress chart less accurate. This is an innate challenge that is unlikely to change. Captains simply reported what they had, and the site manager updated accordingly.

The final challenge was the fact that there was no designated site manager in the original plan for “Walk Across Texas.” After the first week of participation, it was clear that there needed to be a person at each organization to coordinate the captains, pass on the newsletters, help organize the launch and extravaganza events, and so on. This information will be officially incorporated for next year.

### Conclusion

The “Walk Across Texas” program was a tremendous success! Considering this was the first time DHHS/SSA employees participated in the event, everyone caught on quickly and stayed motivated during the entire eight weeks. Many people have been able to continue with the exercise routines they created as a result of their participation in the program, have set weight goals, committed themselves to eating

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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healthier (especially through the holiday season), and have requested that the program be repeated next year. This has been an opportunity for many employees to meet new faces and develop a network to help further their health goals. One gentleman has even decided to start a “Walk Across America.”

The goal was focused and attainable for most participants. With a clear objective in mind and the fact that reaching the goal was a team effort, everyone stayed motivated and received some benefit. Texas Cooperative Extension will continue to motivate Federal employees toward a healthy lifestyle by doing monthly “Brown Bag Lunches” beginning in January at the Federal building. The first presentation and demonstration is entitled “The Soup’s On!”

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### 5. Articles and Health Tips

A very simple and effective way to promote the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign is to feature one of the campaign's articles in your organization's or community's newsletter or newspaper or magazine.

These articles focus on each of the 12 health themes in the campaign, but were written specifically for African American women, Latinas, Asian and Pacific Islander women, and American Indian and Alaskan Native women. You can download these articles on the *Pick Your Path to Health* Web site at [www.4woman.gov/pypth](http://www.4woman.gov/pypth). Depending on your primary audience, you may want to choose which article you print or submit based on this audience, or vary the ethnicity from month to month.

These are timely, educational articles that bring the message of better health in easy-to-read, short articles. They also include simple, easy to implement steps that women can incorporate into their everyday lives.

If you have limited space in your newsletter, magazine or newspaper, you may edit these articles to fit the size you have available.

Another option is to simply drop in the *Pick Your Path to Health's* monthly health tips into your publication. These health tips can also be found on [www.4woman.gov/pypth](http://www.4woman.gov/pypth). Each month has a specific health message with four to five specific action steps that women can take toward bettering their health.

Examples of a health article and monthly health tip follow.

#### **Sample Article** (African American women):

Here's an article on stress that can be downloaded from the *Pick Your Path to Health* Web site and inserted into your organization's newsletter, magazine or newspaper. Or, you can encourage your local newspaper to print these feature articles.

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

### *Pathways to Better Health: A Feature of the Pick Your Path to Health Campaign*

#### **Stress: The Number One Predictor of Diet Failure—and How to Beat It**

##### The Inside Story

The single most common emotional eating trigger and the No.1 predictor of weight-loss relapse is stress, according to obesity expert Dr. John P. Foreyt of Baylor College of Medicine.

Being “stressed out” is a common expression nowadays. You hear this phrase often, and perhaps even utter it from time to time yourself. However, do you really know what being stressed out means?

It is commonly used in a “negative” sense, and when translated it usually means you are beyond your *comfort or tolerance level*—physically and/or psychologically.

Stress isn’t necessarily a bad thing. It’s a natural part of living. Life without any stress is impossible. When you’re working hard, tired, hungry, emotionally charged, or sick with the flu, your body secretes hormones in response to these stressors in order to reestablish your body’s stability. That’s the inside chemistry of stress. Your challenge is to try to maintain a comfortable amount of stress that you can manage.

##### Recognizing Stress

“I don’t know...I start feeling anxious. My temper gets short. I feel hopeless...I know when I’m getting stressed out,” says Kathy Dyer of Bowie, Maryland, mother of three ranging in age from five months to 13 years old, and full-time policy analyst and attorney for the Federal government. Kathy is ahead of the game by the mere fact that she realizes when she has stress and can take measures to handle the situation.

Research has shown that African American women have higher levels of adrenaline in their systems as they are stressed and this can result in high blood pressure and even premature death.

“People are not as aware of the unique stresses that African American women have. In addition to the day-to-day stressors we may all encounter (for example, not having enough money or taking care of your children), African American women

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

also have to deal with how they are viewed in this society as Black women. And that can take a toll on you,” says Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, Medical Director, Office for Women, Family and Community Programs, at Brigham & Women’s Hospital in Boston.

The first step in managing stress is to recognize that it exists. The big stressors are easy to identify—natural disasters, illness, death, births, marriage, moving, job changes. But daily life, the low-grade, day-to-day responsibilities—and yes, even things you enjoy doing that need your constant attention—are stressors and can eventually take their toll on your health. Debra Churos of Alexandria, Virginia, mother of an eight-year-old daughter and part-time office worker, identified some of the following symptoms when she is stressed:

- Anxiety
- Short temper
- Eating – anything and everything
- Feeling hopeless
- Crying
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Breathing heavier, heart pounding
- More emotional/stressed around menstrual cycle

According to the American Medical Women’s Association, Debra’s symptoms are common. Whether you have these symptoms or not, you can be pretty sure that stress has some role and effect on your life and health, and it can play havoc with your weight-control efforts.

### Strategies to Deal With It

Stress happens. And when it does, you will react to it. The most common reaction is to eat. Actually, it’s not a bad idea to eat when feeling stressed. But what you will probably do is to eat something that makes you feel good. You know what those feel-good-foods are: ice cream, potato chips, macaroni and cheese, peach cobbler. This is especially true if you grew up using food as a stress releaser. Instead of reaching for the ice cream, Dr. Bigby recommends coming up with alternatives to release stress.



# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

Try the following:

- *Try healthy comfort-food alternatives:* Low-fat proteins (yogurt, turkey), vegetables, and fruit. If you have a refrigerator at the office, keep some of these in it for when you get hungry. If that's not an option, have some fruit or cut-up raw vegetables in a plastic bag in your purse or at your desk.
- *Don't sweat the small stuff:* Manage your time better. Make a list of what needs to be done and prioritize it. As Debra says, "I ask myself what's the most important thing to accomplish and what can wait."
- *Find time to relax and unwind:* Go to a place just for yourself (bathroom, the park, a special place in your home). Find 10-20 minutes each day to relax and to just give your mind a break.
- *Pray, meditate, yoga:* It works for many people.
- *Exercise:* Walk, endorphins, feel good...dance, endorphins, feel good...
- *Establish a support system:* Join a woman's group of any kind where you will get support and a chance to relate to others.
- *Reduce environmental stressors:* Dislike your job? Find another one. Noisy neighbors getting on your nerves? Move. Sometimes we can't control our environment, but when we can, it can make all the difference.
- *Ask for help when you need it:* Ask and you shall receive.

As you pick your path to a more stress-manageable and healthy life, keep in mind, you may be as Chaka Khan and Whitney Houston profess--"every woman," but every woman still needs a break.

For more information on stress management, weight loss, and health-related topics contact the:

- National Women's Health Information Center, Office of Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov), 1-800-994-WOMAN
- National Institute of Mental Health, [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov), 301-443-4513
- American Institute on Stress, [www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org), 914-963-1200
- American Medical Women's Association, [www.amwa-doc.org](http://www.amwa-doc.org), 703-838-0500
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), 1-888-232-4674.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign or to request weekly health tips by e-mail, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or TDD at 1-888-220-5446, or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov>.*

# Highlights:

## Five Community Activities

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### Sample Health Tip

Here is a sample of a health tip from the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign for the month of March on physical activity.

*Pick Your Path to Health* ([www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov))

#### **Monthly Action Steps for Women on a Path to Better Health**

##### **This Month: March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.**

- Treat your family to some time at a community recreation facility.
- Start to exercise gradually and work your way up.
- Start your spring cleaning early; it's a great way to exercise.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.

# National Women's Health Week

## National Women's Health Week (May 9-15, 2004)

National Women's Health Week is an annual effort through an alliance of organizations that celebrates the extraordinary progress in women's health over the last 100 years. It encourages women to incorporate simple preventative and positive health behaviors into everyday life. When women take even the simplest steps to improve their health, the results can be significant.

National Women's Health Week encourages awareness about key health issues among all women—especially African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latinas, and American Indian and Alaska Native women—since recent research has shown there are significant health disparities among these groups compared to white women.

National Women's Health Week began on Mother's Day, May 9, 2004—the day traditionally set aside to reflect and appreciate the women in our lives—and ran the whole week through May 15. The week's events gave everyone involved an opportunity to let our mothers, wives, daughters, and friends know how important their lives and health are to us!

### How Your Organization Can Participate

National Women's Health Week can be a stand-alone event for your organization or it can be the kick off or launch pad event for promoting upcoming *Pick Your Path to Health* events for the rest of the year.

Whether you're a local health care provider, a business leader, a community organization, or a governor, mayor, or tribal leader, there is something you can do to promote women's health.

On these days, organizations such as yours—community health centers, hospitals, and other health providers across America—will:

- Offer free health screenings to women. The goal is to educate, screen, and counsel underserved women on preventative health issues and help prevent the onset of targeted health conditions.
- Plan events such as walks, health forums, women's health publications releases, issuance of state and local government proclamations, and many other activities.

This year's National Women's Health Week was an overwhelming success! Communities, organizations, and individuals across America chose to celebrate the

# National Women's Health Week

role of good health practices in the lives of women. More than 100 governors, mayors, and tribal leaders proclaimed May 11-17, 2004, as National Women's Health Week in their geographic areas.

Nationwide, there were 644 event and 652 screenings, and 151 proclamations were issued. Twenty-seven national partners helped raise awareness about National Women's Health Week and National Women's Check-Up Day. Partner outreach targeted patient groups, health-related organizations, women's and consumer groups and the top 10 corporations touted in *Working Mothers' The 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers List--2003*. These partners posted information and links on their Web sites, included articles or mentions on NWHW in their newsletters and sent notices out through listservs and other communications vehicles.

This outstanding level of participation proves that whoever and wherever you are, there are many ways to become involved. You can start by taking responsibility for your own health and encouraging the women you know to do the same. Join us by spreading the word about women's health and let's make next year's National Women's Health Week stronger than ever!

Register Your National Women's Health Week Events and Preventive Health Series Online for 2005 NWHW.

Get ready for the 2005 National Women's Health week when thousands of women across the nation will take time to focus on their own health.

Coming soon are two online forms for health providers and others to register their events and/or preventive health services. This will let the world know what you're doing. More information on how to register and participate in National Women's Health Week activities will be posted [as it becomes available] on [www.4woman.gov/WHW](http://www.4woman.gov/WHW), so please check back often.