

Prayer Tabernacle

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Since the beginning of this year we have introduced a new physical activity program which offers low impact aerobics, intro to yoga, intro to Tai Chai, and a faith walk-*Walk to Fitness*. We also expect to expand our screening efforts include cholesterol screening. So far, this year is looking great and God willing we look forward to continuing the race.

To date, we have received at least three requests to assist in starting health ministries in Bridgeport and other areas. Get ready! At this rate you may see us in your area.

3 Living Well Health Ministry (Faith Congregational Church, UCC)

"...I pray that your body is well even as your soul is. (3 John 1:2)" We at Faith Congregational Church have taken this literally. We know that wellness is a total process, which is why this ministry was started. We found out the needs of our congregation and wellness was a major concern. Since the initiation of the program we have received tremendous support from our church family. The Health Ministry is a part of the weekly bulletin and our monthly newsletters are distributed with the programs. They have helped to promote our message by active participation and by supporting our goal of total wellness of the body and spirit.

As a matter of fact we have offered a variety of activities and programs which promote total wellness. Last year, the spring and summer walking session participants teamed up to raise funds for the October Breast Cancer walk. In addition to the walking sessions, we also offered Yoga, Aerobic and strength training classes. We held classes in October and November 2005 and had an excellent turn out. Of all the participants, 85% completed all the classes. This is Phenomenal! We look forward to the next session.

The wellness program was such a success that we've teamed up with the Hartford YWCA and they have agreed to sponsor two programs for their residents. We will be conducting two, four week sessions (Yoga and Aerobics) using the same instructor we use for the church program. Our hope is that the *Living Well Program* at the YWCA will parallel the program offered at Faith. The program at the YWCA began in March 2006 and 12 residents were in attendance. They met us with excitement and enthusiasm.

Another way we're reaching the community is by participating in community events. One of the events we took part in was a Church Expo. There we recruited a few new members for the health ministry team: one of whom is a Diabetes Education Instructor and she will be conducting a series in the spring of 2006. We also supported the Nubian Sisters Cancer Support Group by purchasing a quilt and a Breast Cancer Awareness watch to use in a raffle we held. We are hoping that future opportunities like these will continue to allow us to touch others with the message of total wellness.

4 Free to Grow

"Don't tell anyone...What would they say if they knew?" Many times it is what is not said that is more damaging than what is said. Many people have emotional scars for life or even die because of the unsaid. Unfortunately, in many cultures depression and domestic violence are two topics that are not talked about. It can be shameful for a person to admit that they need help. But Free to Grow is here to help break the silence and the taboo cycle.

Although depression and domestic violence are two very sensitive issues, the Free to Grow Community Group could not ignore the need of the community. People feel that these issues are better dealt with at the community level with residents talking to one another and teaching one another. But partnerships are equally important. Free to Grow has partnered with the Prudence Crandall Center on the the issues of domestic violence and with Positive Alternatives for Children and Teens (PACT) for mental health services.

Long waiting lists and lack of services in Spanish were barriers to people receiving mental health care, but the partnership with the PACT program has allowed people to receive immediate treatment at the North-Oak Community Center. PACT offers Spanish speaking counselors and individual, family and group sessions 6 days per week. Free to Grow is also working with PACT to ensure that the uninsured receive services as well.

To help raise awareness of domestic violence, we have focused on providing training and workshops for all ages. Staff from Prudence Crandall Center meets with preschoolers to talk about how hands are not for hitting, with youth to teach about healthy relationships, with adults to know what are the warning signs of an abusive relationship and where to get help, and with Head Start staff to help identify and refer those in need. The purpose of this program is to increase awareness and end "the silence". We also hope that our community members will take this knowledge and use it as a means of violence prevention.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.