

Institute for the Advancement of Multicultural and Minority Medicine



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A Profile of IAMMM's Partners

The Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Chicago Chapter has been working with young men in the Chicago area. In October, on two separate occasions the Fraternity took 80 young men to the Washburne Culinary Institute at Kennedy King College where they received a four hour course on preparing healthy meals. In the Institute's teaching kitchens, the young men prepared a five course meal that they then enjoyed.

In addition to a series of lectures, group activities, and reinforcing messages about healthy eating, the project was able to increase community awareness regarding the causes and effects of the childhood obesity epidemic. Considerable emphasis was placed on the short and long term effects of obesity on individual medical problems and the economy. The most powerful intervention was the group activities performed by youth in the program. As students learned about the nutritional content of food ingredients and prepared foods, they felt empowered to make better decisions. Body mass index (BMI) measurements were taken of the 80 students at the beginning of the initiative in the summer and again in November. The results were 22.94 and 23.24 respectively which did not indicate a statistically significant change.

The lectures and discussions with community members focused on several benefits of reducing childhood obesity, including: improving self-image, reducing childhood asthma and diabetes, and promoting longer life expectancy. The Kappa's distributed surveys to the participants to determine how much they learned during the sessions. After analyzing the survey results, the Kappas' stressed it is imperative that any message be presented in a context that is relevant to the audience.

IAMMM's

Partnerships to Address Obesity

- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
- Association of Latino Administrators & Superintendents
- Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc.
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Girls Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- National Alliance of Black School Educators
- National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc.
- Student National Medical Association
- The Links, Inc.

They also noted that awareness is enhanced when the information presented is coupled with interaction or engagement of the audience in activities that facilitate application of the new information. For example, group exercises allowed students to apply the information presented and comprehend Recommended Daily Allowance tables on food products. The education students were provided in the teaching kitchens of the culinary institute allowed the students to prepare meals with a special emphasis on nutrition. More importantly, students were empowered to share the information with their families and form healthy habits that may last a lifetime.



Look for these articles in the next edition of the Newsletter.

- The National Association of Black Social Workers develops the Childhood Obesity Reduction Initiative (CORI).
- Chi Eta Phi Nursing Sorority, Inc.

Is Childhood Obesity an Epidemic? Healthy People 2010

This feature of the Newsletter focuses on childhood obesity as an epidemic. The first newsletter included a quote about childhood obesity from Dr. Riza Lavizzo-Mourey, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, originally in the RWJF 2006 Annual Report President's Message: "though not infectious, it is spreading rapidly. Though treatable, it resists treatment..." In this issue, IAMMM will focus on some of the strategies that have been identified to address childhood obesity as an epidemic.

According to the Institute of Medicine, American children live in a society that has changed dramatically in the three decades in which the obesity epidemic has developed. The increasing number of obese children and youth throughout the United States has led policy makers to describe it as a critical public health threat. Since the 1970s, the obesity rate has more than doubled for preschool children ages 2-5 and adolescents ages 12-19, and it has more than tripled for children ages 6-11. At present, approximately nine million children over six years of age are obese.

Childhood obesity is an epidemic, and combating this epidemic will require the involvement of multiple stakeholders from diverse segments of society. It must be a national effort with special attention given to communities that experience health disparities and that have environments that do not support healthful nutrition and physical activity. Efforts to combat obesity cannot succeed unless they also engage the families, schools, and communities that create the environments in which children live and their behaviors are formed.

An overarching goal of *Healthy People 2010* is to eliminate health disparities among racial/ethnic populations. As of 2007, no state had met the *Healthy People 2010* objective to reduce to 15 percent the prevalence of obesity among U.S. adults.

Fewer Schools Selling Candy and Sodas to Students

A study published last year in the *Journal of Adolescent Medicine* found that fewer U.S. high schools and middle schools are selling candy, soda and salty snacks to students. The report was based on a survey of public schools in 34 states that compared results from 2006 to 2008. The share of schools that sell soda and artificial fruit drinks dropped from 62% to 37%. The improvements were most dramatic in some Southern states. In Mississippi, the proportion selling sodas dropped from 78% to 25%, and in Tennessee it dropped from 73% to 26%. The researchers suggested that state policies could do more to help schools restrict competitive foods and comply with nutrition standards for foods and beverages. The evidence shows that schools may need more resources to implement and monitor the requirements that are part of such policies. They noted that strong school district policies that restrict access to sugar-sweetened beverages can improve student health, but to advance such policies, research is needed on the differences in student consumption levels, as well as the role of ethnicity, income and geography. Also, they pointed out that school policies that support more vigorous physical education are needed to help produce significant increases in students' physical activities levels which may impact body mass index (BMI) levels over time.

Weight of the Nation

Last summer in Washington, D.C. the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity held its inaugural conference on obesity prevention and control, *Weight of the Nation*, which provided a forum to highlight progress in the prevention and control of obesity through policy and environmental strategies framed around four intervention settings:

- community,
- medical care,
- school, and
- workplace.

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