

Institute for the Advancement of Multicultural and Minority Medicine



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PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY ALUMNAE CHAPTER (PGAC) DELTA SIGMA THETA, SORORITY, INC.

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.



The TORCH Pilot Program *Taking Ownership and Responsibility for the Childhood Health* program was designed to be self sustaining for the chapter's with community partners, and replicated with the sorority's other 900 chapters around the world. The goal was for participants to learn a skill set that would encourage an increase in the amount and intensity of exercise performed, promote healthy food choices and build positive self-images that will

help them to maintain or achieve a healthy weight. It is by implementing this regimen of lifetime behavior changes that the desired change in weight will be maintained, as opposed to simply offering a set of exercises that will cause the children to lose weight but that may not be sustainable in the long term.

Once the data have been collected from the evaluations and weigh-ins, a review will be made to determine the reduction that has been achieved. It is anticipated that these reductions in childhood obesity rates, once achieved, will be sustained via wholesale lifestyle change that the participants can continue even after the program ends. The points of contact within the community partners included those who have on-going interaction with the children- including the school nurse, the youth minister, and the community center director, PGAC expects that the children will be able to continue their healthy eating and exercise habits, with a little continued encouragement from these "coaches". The Chapter partnered with the Kentland Community Center, The New Home Baptist Church and G. James Ghalson Middle School and provided them with self-esteem/ body image workshops, an "Ask the Experts" panel, healthy recipes for the family, healthy recipes the kids can prepare, and exercises that can be done at home, so that the children, now that they are armed with the resources to do so, will be able to continue to do the work on their own.

The TORCH pilot program the Chapter implemented has already developed a comprehensive overview, purpose and goal. PGAC established a detailed, year round program that can be implemented anywhere, by any of Delta's 900 chapters, and that fits within the national mandate for sorority members to impact the health of their families. With its theme of Educate, Demonstrate and Collaborate, existing TORCH guidelines can be tailored to suit every chapter.

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A Profile of IAMMM's Partners

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

The Epsilon Tau Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha gave a presentation to students and their families in Hempstead, Texas about the causes and consequences of childhood obesity. The presentation encouraged students to participate in physical activities and pledge to live a healthier lifestyle by selecting nutritious foods and exercising daily. It walks students through the five basic food groups, teaches them how to recognize and read a food label, and teaches them how to do different fun exercises at home.

The fraternity engaged the local school principals and local community leaders through an initial introductory project letter, which explained the project, revealed statistics from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation research about childhood obesity and its consequences, and explained the chapter's desire to engage in thoughtful conversation about project implementation.

The chapter primarily worked with Hempstead Elementary School. In discussions with the principal and physical education instructors, the chapter discovered that the school requires all students to attend physical education classes for one hour per day, and a separate recess, in which they do ten (10) minutes of group exercise. The chapter will continue childhood obesity projects with the students on a monthly basis and continuously hear health messages and participate in obesity awareness related activities to ensure success and to gauge comprehension. The chapter will also continue its relationships with the school principal and with the physical education department, create activities, and build this project into its annual community projects budget.

There is a great need to continue to communicate the obesity awareness messages to the local community because there are few to no resources or community programs geared towards obesity awareness.

The chapter received a great response from community leaders and school officials; everyone was interested in finding out more information about the factors that perpetuate childhood obesity. As mentioned earlier, the chapter drafted an initial project letter to garner support from community leaders. Responses were received from Hempstead Elementary School and the Prairie View City Council. After further discussions with the city council members, the chapter was successful in obtaining resources and contact information for school officials and a resolution and commitment to continue projects in the local community.

The childhood obesity project was integrated with the fraternity's planned national service projects, allowing the fraternity to fulfill multiple goals while educating the local community.

Girls, Inc.

In order to promote sustainability of health and fitness in Ward 7 of the District of Columbia, Girls, Inc., Has developed a health and wellness program entitled "*My Challenge My Choice*". This teaches that good health is a life-long goal that begins with making small steps that will lessen the chances of childhood obesity and health problems in the future.

Thursdays were designed cooking days, during which the girls learned to make healthy snacks and eat a balanced diet. The recipes used were then put together for the girls to create their own Girls Inc. cookbook. While cooking, discussions were held regarding the different food groups and how to make these healthy snacks on a budget. Through these cooking activities, it is anticipated that the lessons learned will carry the girls throughout their lives and better equip them to lead healthier lives.

In addition, the girls began tilling the soil to establish the Girls Inc. community garden. After pulling up the overgrown plants and weeds they researched what plants would grow with success in the District of Columbia climate. A "Girls Inc. Community Garden Manual" was created with the goal of providing fresh grown produce.

Along with promoting a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet and fresh produce, "*My Challenge My Choice*" encourages the girls to be active and have fun while exercising. Thirty minutes of exercise was designated every day to get the girls moving through fun games such as tag, double dutch jump rope, relay races, scavenger hunts, and basketball. They encouraged the girls to participate in sports and helped them sign up for local sports leagues. The girls have also set individual health goals and steps they will take to reach their goals.

Through these steps, Girls Inc. teaches the girls how to sustain a healthy lifestyle, and teach them that these small steps are attainable and fun to work towards.

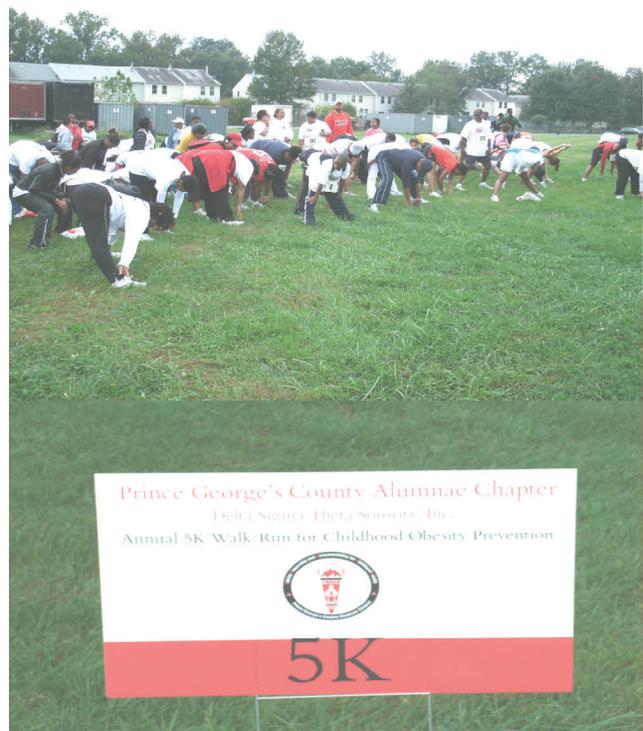
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PGCAC—Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Given its existing strong foundation, it is anticipated that the TORCH program will be easily integrated into the National Sorority's already established *Healthy Lifestyles for the Family-Healthy Weight Initiative*, which all chapters are currently required to implement.

This initiative relies on the fact that as women, the sorority is well positioned to impact not only their own health, but the health of their families and communities as well. The integration of the TORCH program into the existing initiative would require that PGAC include an emphasis on preventing and reversing childhood obesity, in addition to maintaining the overall family health. Since the existing initiative is implemented nationally, the childhood obesity component could be fully integrated with it, thereby reaching every chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

The Chapter celebrates the success of its 5-K run/walk for Childhood Obesity Prevention held recently at Prince George Community College. Over 200 children and parents participated in the event.



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Funding for this newsletter was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). For more information about RWJF's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, please visit: www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity.