

HealthVisions Update

HealthVisions Midwest, Inc.—Lake County, IN
Health Ministry Partnership— St. Joseph, Marshall, Elkhart County, IN
HealthVisions Fort Wayne—Allen County, IN
Living for Life—Starke County, IN
Chicago Health Collaborative - Chicago, IL
Healthy Communities of LaPorte County, IN

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This issue features: HealthVisions Fort Wayne- Allen County, IN

HealthVisions of Fort

Wayne brings preventive health care education and best- practice models into the lives of people living in the Central and Southeast area of Fort Wayne. We provide low or no cost exercise programs, health education, and nutrition program throughout the Central and Southeast area of Fort Wayne.

Our ***Faith In Action*** program provides supportive services to individuals who are homebound, frail, elderly, or affected with long-term health conditions. The program trains volunteers from interfaith churches to supportive services to seniors in under served areas of Fort Wayne.

HealthVisions works with individuals and organizations to close the racial and ethnic health disparity in underserved populations.



HOME SUPPORT EXERCISE PROGRAM

Everybody can and should exercise--especially those older people with

disabilities or disease. For the homebound senior, regular moderate exercise can mean the difference between staying independent or requiring institutional care. Studies have shown that people who learn to exercise on their own have a higher chance of maintaining a regular exercise program.

To help keep seniors independent and healthy, HealthVisions of Fort Wayne and Aging and In-Home Services have joined forces to help homebound seniors in Central and Southeast Fort Wayne improve health with the Home Support Exercise Program. Trained fitness instructors go into participant's homes and teach ten simple exercises, leave a packet with pictures and descriptions of all the exercises and a calendar to record daily activities. Our instructors then follow up with bi-monthly visits and phone calls to keep participants motivated and on track.

The Home Support Exercise Program provides the skill building and motivation needed by homebound older adults to perform ten basic exercises designed to help maintain or improve endurance, balance, strength and flexibility. Many of the participants started the program unable to get out of a chair without using their arms and by the 6 month mark could rise from their chair with ease. Participants also report how much better they feel doing simple daily tasks.

The 6-month pilot program began in January 2004 and was limited to the first 40 enrollees who lived in Central or Southeast Fort Wayne. Participants also needed to sign an informed consent form, and have a signed doctor's release allowing participation. All services are provided without regard to race, age, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin or ancestry. This program is funded in part by Title IIIF of the Older Americans Act, which limits eligibility to those aged 60 and over.



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Physical Fitness and Nutrition – “From the Ground Up”

Obesity in children and adults is a national concern. Between 16% and 33% of children and adolescents are obese. Poor diet and lack of exercise leads to unhealthy weight gain, and is responsible for over 300,000 deaths each year with an estimated societal cost of over \$100 billion annually.

In a novel approach to urban health disparities, HealthVisions of Fort Wayne launched a pilot program, *Physical Fitness and Nutrition –From the Ground Up (exercise and nutrition)*

to provide a fun summer of physical activity and nutrition, through gardening, to local kids.

Using the Junior Master Gardener’s basic curriculum and adding the fitness component, the goal was to promote healthier lifestyles to children and their parents. Gardening could well be the perfect activity to counter the obesity epidemic. From preparing the soil, to planting the seeds, to harvesting the vegetables and preparing their favorite veggie dishes, gardening fulfills the need for exercise and better nutrition.

Thanks to a grant from the Indiana Department of Health, HealthVisions of Fort Wayne was able to lead a collaborative initiative partnering with Fort Wayne Parks & Recreation Department’s *Move to Improve Program*, Phoenix Manor Senior Apartments, Allen County Extension Office, and the Purdue Cooperative Extension Junior Master Gardener program. Two organic garden sites were created, a raised bed site at Phoenix Manor Senior Apartments, and a larger garden donated by Come As you Are Community Church. Phoenix Manor started with 5 kids and two volunteers, while Come As You Are, the larger of the two sites, started with 15 kids and six volunteers. Volunteers were trained in the Indiana Junior Master Gardener Program on May 24, 2004 at the Allen County Extension Office. Joline Bowers, Outreach Manager of HealthVisions Lifetime of Fitness oversaw the program.

This program provided hands on experiences to children who had never stepped foot in a garden before. By working in the garden and seeing the “fruits” of their labor, kids were able to learn about better nutritional habits, exercise principles and stretches to reduce chances of injury. The volunteers provided an important intergenerational connection and mentored the kids in the scientific skills needed to produce a successful garden, awareness of the environment, and rewards of community service.

As the summer progressed, all the children and volunteer’s hard work was rewarded with bushels of green beans, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, corn, flat (Italian) beans, zucchini, spaghetti squash, collard greens, okra, and two different varieties of peas. There is nothing better than the taste of fresh vegetables from the garden and the children who participated in the garden project actually ate the vegetables that they grew. An additional benefit came for Ephraim Smiley, volunteer gardener extraordinaire. Ephraim not only lost 15 pounds during the project he was also able to reduce his diabetic medication.

Both garden sites provided fresh vegetables for community members and neighbors, however, Come As you Are Community Church had such a bountiful supply of fresh produce that they opened their garden to the public in need, especially seniors and single parents. The children and their parents will complete the program by learning how to can some of their vegetables at the Purdue Extension Office and will be able to take their canned goods home. Finally, a cookbook is in the works with recipes for the vegetables they grew, as well as pictures from the garden.