

## **BODY AND SOUL: A CELEBRATION OF HEALTHY EATING AND LIVING**

*Peer counseling and a healthier church environment promote dietary changes and weight loss*

### **Public Health Problem**

- African Americans have higher rates of many serious and often fatal chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- African American residents of Pennsylvania are more likely to be obese than other population groups putting them at risk for developing these diseases.
- Wellness programs that help people learn to make healthier food choices can lead to reduced risk factors for disease by promoting healthier body weight and lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels.
- Faith-based health promotion interventions can be effective in helping African Americans make dietary changes.

### **Program**

- *Body and Soul: A Celebration of Healthy Eating and Living* is a faith-based program adopted in many African-American churches and created by the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society.
- Program intervention strategies include pastoral involvement, church-wide educational activities, increasing access to fruits and vegetables in the church environment and peer education as a way to reduce the risk for diet-related chronic diseases.
- Delivered under the auspices of the University of Pittsburgh Center for Minority Health, the pilot program is coordinated by the Center for Healthy Hearts and Souls, a community faith-based initiative partnering with Macedonia Baptist Church of Pittsburgh.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health plans to expand Body and Soul to at least six other counties in Pennsylvania.

### **Impact**

- Over 3000 people a week have been reached with healthy eating and living information from their pastors, health ministry, peer counselors, and through church bulletins over the course of the twelve to fourteen week program.
- Members of one parish lost a total of over 10,000 pounds when challenged by a pastor to make a commitment to eating healthier and exercising more.

### **Contact**

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