

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT OBESITY

Sisters Together program helps reduce diabetes-related health disparity in Tennessee

Public Health Problem

- Almost three quarters of the adults in Hamilton County, Tennessee are overweight or obese putting them at higher risk for developing diabetes.
- This region of Tennessee also has the highest diabetes death rate for both men and women.
- Healthy eating and physical activity are the keys to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and can help prevent and/or control diabetes.

Program

- The Urban League of Greater Chattanooga Tennessee implemented a pilot adaptation of an evaluated National Institutes of Health healthy weight program called *Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better* which is designed to appeal to African American women, a population group with a high rate of obesity.
- Funding was provided by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Unum, a Tennessee-based insurance company, the Lyndhurst Foundation, and the Tennessee Department of Health.
- The main objective was to implement a sustainable program so that many more African American women would be able to reach fitness and nutrition goals following the pilot implementation. The Tennessee Department of Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, Waterhouse Public Relations, the Black Nurses Association, and Erlanger Health System joined the original partners to enhance sustainability of the program.

Impact

- All participants reported improved eating habits and increased weekly physical activity.
- Almost a third of the participants lowered their body mass index, an indicator that correlates with the amount of body fat a person has.
- The Urban League and local partners are extending this successful program as a “Little Sisters” program for teens, reaching a vulnerable group earlier in the cycle of developing obesity.

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