

Locals hit the streets for National Walking Day

BY LAYLA GARDS
THE CHRONICLE

City residents recently took to the streets, joining countless other communities nationwide in the quest for better health.

In celebration of National Walking Day, observed April 3, the American Heart Association joined forces with area businesses to encourage members of the local workforce to take the first step in becoming more physically active, by committing to take at least 30 minutes out of their day to get up and walk. According to the AHA, adults need a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week in order to decrease their risk of hypertension and enjoy other health benefits, such as improved bone health, better sleep and increased energy.

"It's amazing what 150 minutes will do for you," declared Mayor Allen Joines. "We know that over 50 percent of our population doesn't get any exercise, and that will certainly impact blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and all of those things."

Six Triad companies were slated to take part in the 2013 event, which was sponsored locally by TE Connectivity. More than 250 TE Connectivity employees signed up to take part in a 30-minute walk on the company's grounds.

TE Connectivity is proud to be a sponsor of the American Heart Association's National Walking Day. Many of our employees regularly walk on our campus as part of our health and fitness program," stated Shad Kroeger, senior vice president of Relay Products.

AHA Regional Community Leadership Team Captain Alvin Borders helped to coordinate the effort in Winston-Salem, which was launched near the Bryce Stewart Municipal Building on Wednesday.

"Our goal is just to bring recognition to the fact that people need to be physically fit and continue to stay vibrant," Borders said.

Borders, who also serves as vice president and director of Workforce Development for the



Photos by Layla Gards
Fred Moore and Reginald Clinton take part in the walking event near City Hall South.

Winston-Salem Urban League, said he got involved with the American Heart Association about a year ago, when his gospel singing group, Exalted Praise, began distributing AHA fliers and information at the venues where they performed.

"The health disparity is in the African American community, sure enough," said the father of six. "We felt like we had a responsibility to do more than sing, that's why we've been giving out the (AHA) information."



May



Borders

Borders says he knows first hand how easy it is to let your level of physical activity slip. He was inspired to take his own health into his own hands after climbing on the scale one day to discover that he had gained a significant amount of weight, almost without noticing. He has since begun exercising, and has lost nearly 50 pounds to date.

"I feel great. I really do. It feels great to be vibrant," he said. "The walking led to the gym. I've been lifting weights - I hadn't really done that since high school."

Borders, a grandfather of three, believes his real-life struggle will resonate with the folks he is trying to encourage to incorporate more physical activity into their lives.

"I thought it was also interesting for somebody that's not necessarily in shape to tell people that we can do this together," he commented. "You are somebody that has been

there and done that that's telling people, 'We can do this.'"

Reginald Clinton and Fred Moore were among those who took part in Walking Day downtown. Both men are members of Exalted Praise and AHA volunteers. Moore, a job developer for the Urban League, said he has enjoyed educating the community through Exalted Praise.

"We try to educate them on the sly," he said of their audience, whom he said is receptive to the group's message. "I don't think people are ever rejecting Heart Association information. They desire to hear more, that is my sense."

For Clinton, participating in the walk was the latest in a series of lifestyle changes he's made as a result of being involved with the AHA.

"I've learned how important it is to keep up with your health," he said.

Winston-Salem State University student Amber May manned the information table downtown last week. May, a senior healthcare management major and AHA intern, also helped organize a series of "Go Red for Women" heart disease awareness campaigns on campus in February.

"I think it's a really necessary project in the community because we get an hour for lunch and if you take 30 minutes to walk, you can burn off some of those calories from lunch," she said of Walking Day. "I heard a physician say doing your exercise is like brushing your teeth for your heart ... so it's important for me."

Learn more at www.heart.org. Visit www.heart.org/national-walkingday.

Students

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Ortega and other immigrants shared their experiences during an April 11 panel discussion at their school, Forsyth Tech. Five students - Ortega, Abigail Cruz, Dulce Moreno, Salomon Pinargote and Estela Torres - spoke out about the challenges members of the Hispanic community face in the educational sector and in society.

"People think that Latinos or Mexicans or whoever don't want to study, don't want to learn. They think it's their choice and their fault, but that's not necessarily true," said Pinargote, a native of Ecuador. "It has a lot to do with how society treats Latino students. People expect Latino students to fail."

Some members of the panel also recently spoke at the World View Conference at UNC Chapel Hill, and Carol Hayes, a communications teacher at Forsyth Tech, invited them to address their instructors and peers as well.

"I think this is something that really needs to be heard. We're getting to see a unique perspective," commented the Clemson University alumna. "...I hope that (audience members) have some insight into another culture because if you can have empathy and understand where a person's coming from, it changes the whole dialogue and opens the doors of communication because although we have a lot of differences, we have a lot of similarities as well."

For Cruz, who grew up in Davidson County, being the lone Hispanic student in her community, coupled with the fact that she didn't speak English when she started kindergarten, made for a daunting experience.

"I went into the classroom, and automatically I was sat at the back ... It was as if I was not even there,"



Photo by Layla Gards

Juan Ortega speaks.

she said.

As she gained a command of the language, Cruz said the scope of the discrimination she faced came into focus.

"Once I knew English, it was a whole different story. It was like, 'Oh, the little brown girl - don't talk to her. She doesn't look like us,'" she related. "I went into this big depression - I was on medication - just because I heard all these bullying comments."

Torres, a Salvadorian, said she had the opposite experience. The self-described "over achiever" said she was buoyed by the confidence her mother and teachers displayed in her as a child.

"All of my teachers would tell me what a helpful, smart girl I was, and that my mother must be very proud," she said. "That got to me - knowing that someone other than my mother believed in me. That gave me confidence in myself."

Though she is an American citizen, Torres says she knows many people who suffer because they are not, which propels her to strive to be the best she can be.

"That helps me in the struggles of staying up and studying and trying to get

through college," she remarked. "I'm doing it for my mother and for other students that can't."

The North Carolina General Assembly is currently considering a tuition equality bill that could ease the financial strain for undocumented students. The In-State Tuition/Some N.C. Immigrant Youth Act, which would allow all youth who have graduated from North Carolina high schools and lived in the state for at least two years to pay the in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities, was introduced in the NC House last week, as thousands of immigrants and their supporters converged on Washington, D.C. to demand immigration reform.

Ortega is hopeful that The Dream Act, which was reintroduced earlier this year, will open the doors for longtime residents like him to gain citizenship. Regardless of the Act's fate, Ortega said he is determined to succeed.

"My parents brought me here to this country for better, and I am not going to let them down," he declared. "They came a long way for me, and I will do the same for them."

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Nubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636 Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

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INFORMATION SESSIONS
Potential sale of LVM Coliseum & Bowman Gray Stadium

A sale would save the city the expense of operating and maintaining these facilities, pay off existing debt and enable the city to address other pressing capital needs.

PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

- Tues., April 23, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. LVM Coliseum Deacon Room

Comments about both facilities are welcome.

Can't attend? Read information and watch a video at www.CityofWS.org and comment online or on the Citizen Feedback Line (734-1400)