

Obesity Task Force Meeting
August 14, 2012
AL Power Company WaterCourse Building
Clanton, AL



Alabama Obesity Task Force (AL OTF)

Mission Statement:

“Working toward prevention and reduction of obesity for a healthier Alabama”

Purpose (Branding) Statement:

“The State Obesity Task Force works to address overweight and obesity issues through advocacy, policies, environmental changes, and programs that support healthy lifestyle changes.”

Michael Jackson welcomed the participants, followed by introductions. Michael asked Mim Gaines to explain the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that had been released the previous day on the nation’s obesity rates. In 2011, there was a change in the way the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) was collected. In the past, CDC called only land line phones. However, since so many people only use cell phones, they incorporated cell-phone only households. Also, to generate more accurate estimates of obesity prevalence, small changes were made to the criteria used to determine which respondents are included in the data analysis. Because of these changes, estimates from 2011 forward cannot be compared to estimates from previous years. We are to go forward with 2011 data as the new baseline for obesity prevalence.

The report stated that no state had a prevalence of adult obesity less than 20 percent, and 12 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia) had a prevalence of 30 percent or more. Colorado is still the lowest at 20.7 percent and Mississippi at 34.9 percent was the highest. Alabama is ranked at number 4; Mississippi, Louisiana, West Virginia, and Alabama are the top four. The South had the highest prevalence of adult obesity (29.5 percent), followed by the Midwest (29 percent), the Northeast (25.3 percent) and the West (24.3 percent).

BRFSS is only one of several data sets that monitor rates of obesity in the United States. When considering these other data sets, including the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the obesity epidemic is still a major public health problem.

Mim continued with an overview of the HBO Weight of the Nation Video materials. She reviewed the web page (www.HBO.com/weightofthenation) and provided a short preview. Examples of how the materials were already being utilized included

incorporating in class work at AUM, UA, and UAB as well as in communities, such as Anniston's town hall meeting. The discussion of how the OTF will use the materials followed. Examples of how Ideas centered on using the materials for awareness building purposes. The HBO kit may be ordered at no cost from the web site at: <http://theweightofthenation.hbo.com/screenings/request-screening>

Helen Wilson described the community changes that are based from a small grant from the National Initiative Children's Healthcare Quality; Be Our Voice initiative. <http://www.nichq.org/> . The grant requires advocacy training and one policy, system, or environmental change.

The average income in the Tuskegee area is less than \$20,000 a year. The community is experiencing an increase in unemployment and a decrease in residents. Medical overview reveals 5 and 6 year old children already on cholesterol medicine and high cases of childhood obesity.

The grant was able to establish a strong advocacy support from the Parish nurses, Tuskegee University staff, nursing students, and city leaders- especially the mayor. The environmental change to support healthier lifestyles selected was a community garden. The Extension Service provided seeds; the church provided the land; retired health professionals provided educational sessions, such as reading food labels; and the university provided students. As a result of the collaboration efforts and increased awareness about obesity:

- College polices are being reviewed to shorten some of the campus van routes to increase physical activity on campus
- Twenty five (25) girls from local churches will be selected to participate in a 5 week series of health topics, including nutrition, physical activity, and coping mechanisms
- Adults are more aware of their function as role models and weight loss efforts have started

For more details about this project contact Helen Wilson at lwilson838@yahoo.com

Rebecca Sterling and Amy Robinson shared information about Sterling Health and the Healthy Huntsville Initiative. Sterling Health was formed from the concern of increased use of pharmacological routes to address diseases stemming from lifestyle choices. Visit www.healthsterling.com . One of Sterling Health's goals is to get community involvement by building on the positive aspects of the culture. A downloadable application was created for "Healthy Huntsville". It is the pilot for a wider application, Healthy City. On a low budget, various creative methods were used to gather citizen input and comments in designing the app. The main question was, "How would you Build a Healthy City?" The components to make a healthy city are in components:

- Education- This message is, "A healthy body fuels a healthy mind."
- Social- Social interaction is needed for support, participation, and enthusiasm. Events at the Huntsville Baseball game are examples of the social venue used.

- Fun- Health and fitness aspects must be fun for people to continue to do them. To gain interest fun events such as the cook off chili were sponsored.

On the application, Daily Feats: Go Do Good, is a way of personal tracking. The tracking system is based on a point system which provides incentives and donations allowed for certain point levels. The application has interactive capabilities such as a collecting “likes” for articles posted as well as providing a calendar of events. The goal was 100 free events in the city. Spin off events are occurring now. If you are interesting in learning more contact Rebecca Sterling at rebecca@healthsterling.com .

Announcements from the floor:

- Linda Jennings announced the Healthy Vending Machine initiative had gained more support from hospitals and businesses. Entergen (AlaGas Co) will be using it in the Birmingham area and AUM will be using it in their fall kickoff event. For more information, contact Linda Jennings at linda.jennings@adph.state.al.us
- Melanie Rightmyer announced leadership training on the Living Well Course will be offered on September 20, 21, and 27. If you are interested in becoming a lay leader for this chronic disease prevention course, contact her at Melanie.rightmyer@adph.state.al.us
- Kathe Briggs announced the new bike trail at Chocoloa state park in Auburn was now open. <http://www.alapark.com/chewacla/>
- Anise Simon shared that she was completing her internship and had just completed a study on obesity and will be starting a 501C3
- Amanda Edwards, from the Hampstead Institute, <http://hampsteadinstitute.org/> , passed a sheet around for signatures of those interested in the State Food Policy Council. For more information, contact Edwin Marty at edwin@hampsteadinstitute.org
- Verna Gates reminded the group that a constitutional amendment will appear on the November 2012 general election ballot to allow voters in Alabama a chance to continue Forever Wild. Forever Wild helps to provide some of the most unique outdoor recreation opportunities in Alabama and protects water quality to benefit all citizens. No funding comes from taxes. For more information: <http://alabamiansforforeverwild.org/>

Committee Work Session was from 11:00 until 11:50.

New members and first time guests were asked to talk with a Membership Committee member, Heather Whitley, for a brief orientation.

Committee reporting:

Advocacy and Data- A statewide survey to determine the opinion on obesity topics and key policy issues was discussed.

Community- The Wellness Guide for Alabama businesses is in the final stages of proofing and will be formatted for posting on the Obesity Task Force (OTF) web site and printed in limited copies. The next project will be utilizing the OTF current handout on active communities. <http://adph.org/obesity/Default.asp?id=1988>

Communications- The Communication group will develop a dissemination plan for the Wellness Guide and the tool kit with community handouts. At future OTF meetings the committee will have a table area for members to bring materials of initiatives or projects. This will allow sharing between members and also provide the committee with potential topics for news articles.

Health Care Providers- Work continues on the project with specified pediatricians in Alabama.

Healthy Kids- This new committee worked to finalize goals. The group decided to include home, school, and community in the approaches instead of focusing only on schools. They have funds to award to up to four (4) schools for nutrition improvements in utilizing the Fuel Up with Nutrient Rich Foods materials or for physical activity improvements.

Membership- The committee reviewed an internet survey to be sent to all Task Force members to gather presentation topics and formats for future meetings.

Student Engagement- A newly appointed Dean at AU is over Health Issues. Information about the OTF will be provided to the Dean. UA classes will begin this month.

After committee reports, Michael Jackson adjourned the meeting.

