



Plainfield Health Center  
*"Building a Healthier Tomorrow...since 1969"*

# HEALTHLINE

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## PHC Tackling Pediatric Obesity

### *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Puts Weight Behind School-Based Program*

One year ago, Da'meeisha Bryant was your typical eight-year-old girl, filling her afternoons with television, chips, candy and soda — and heading toward a lifetime of obesity. Today she's heading in an entirely different direction, thanks to Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun, Plainfield Health Center's school-based Pediatric Fitness & Obesity Prevention Program. The fourth grade student is now exercising daily, eating nutritiously and losing weight. At the same time, she's gaining self-confidence and a whole new perspective on wellness. With a spring in her step, Da'meeisha remarked, "I feel good, and strong, and I want to be healthy!"

Plainfield Health Center launched this groundbreaking project last Fall in response to alarming trends cited by the National Institutes of Health, American Academy of Pediatrics and other leading health authorities. The prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents has doubled over the past 20 years, with one in every six Americans between 6 and 19 years of age currently overweight. "Clearly, more and more research is showing that we are in the midst of an epidemic," stated Susan Walsh, MD, Chief Medical Officer, PHC. Evidence already points to increased incidences of hypertension, diabetes, depression, asthma and other medical problems among obese youths. "We need to start protecting our children from chronic illnesses before they have to manage them through their adult and senior years," added Dr. Walsh.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is the largest benefactor to put its weight behind Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun with a \$281,000 grant, joining Schering-Plough Foundation, Boston Scientific Foundation and other sponsors recognizing this

urgent need. The project is being piloted among third and fourth graders at Plainfield's Washington Community School, home to one of PHC's satellite facilities, The Healthy Place. Interestingly, a previous RWJF grant provided the seed money to open this school-based health center site as a primary care resource for the student population.

Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun is all about prevention and early intervention — generating awareness about pediatric obesity and teaching families to embrace healthier lifestyles. Involving a partnership among PHC, YWCA of Central New Jersey, the Plainfield Board of Education, Washington Community School and corporate supporters, the collaborative program uniquely blends education, physical activities and individual case management provided in a safe, familiar and nurturing environment.

The effort began with a comprehensive baseline study that assessed the behaviors, body mass index and risk factors affecting the target population. After surveying roughly half of the third grade families, we discovered that one-third of those children was already overweight and in trouble. Not surprising, when you saw that 28 percent of the kids watched at least four hours of television a day and 64 percent reported only 10 to 15 minutes of daily exercise. "We learned that we had a much bigger problem than we thought," said Dr. Walsh.



*Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun was officially kicked-off last October with a pep-rally at Washington Community School. Four-time Olympian Joetta Clark Diggs led the students in exercise as the program was playfully introduced.*

Now in full swing, the initiative has enrolled 50 students who meet after-school three afternoons each week. At no cost to their families, the children enjoy healthy snacks and a variety of fitness activities coordinated by an exercise physiologist. "There is something for everyone, from organized sports to relay games that encourage leadership, teamwork and communication skills," stated Cathleen Ludlow, Health and Fitness Director, YWCA of Central

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## We've Come a Long Way, Baby! Expanded Midwifery Program Celebrates Success

Nurse-midwives are dramatically impacting the landscape of women's health — across the nation and within our own community. The American College of Nurse-Midwives reports that the number of women choosing midwifery has doubled in the last decade, representing a dynamic, growing preference for this holistic model of care. The trend recently prompted an expansion of Plainfield Health Center's Midwifery Program, which now provides a full spectrum of obstetrical and gynecological services through what many consider to be an ideal blend of art and science.

Plainfield resident Patrisha Cargill is among the converted. After four pregnancies and deliveries under the exclusive care of a physician, she chose a nurse-midwife for baby number five. "My obstetrician never seemed to know who I was... I had to remind him of my medical history on every visit," she said, describing her encounters as rushed and stressful.

"I had the most incredible experience with the nurse-midwives at Plainfield Health Center. They were warm, compassionate and extremely knowledgeable," noted Ms. Cargill, who also happens to be a registered nurse. "I used to have panic attacks before my deliveries. This time I was calm; the birth felt much more relaxed and natural."

Ms. Cargill's reflections convey the essence of midwifery care, which advocates a personalized, comprehensive approach to women's health and wellness. Nurse-midwives provide a wide range of primary, gynecological and maternity care to women at all stages of life, placing special emphasis on education and tending to each patient's physical, emotional and psychological needs.

Research affirms that midwifery care offers substantial benefits to patients. Studies published by the American Journal of Public Health and other respected medical publications document that women receiving collaborative midwifery care had birth success rates comparable to those who saw only physicians, with fewer interventions and lower cost to the health care system. Surveys also reveal that women, like Patrisha Cargill, spend more time with their

primary provider and are very satisfied with the care they receive.

While Plainfield Health Center has maintained a Midwifery Program since 1991, the service was augmented last September under a collaborative arrangement with doctors from Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center. The most significant enhancement gave midwives a leading role in the delivery room. Although trained and certified for this privilege, they performed less than 10 percent of hospital deliveries until 2004. "Last year, our midwives delivered 485 babies, nearly 70 percent of the health center's deliveries and 37 percent more births than the year before," stated Shirley White-Walker, CNM, Chief Nurse-Midwife, attributing the increase to additional staff and around-the-clock coverage at Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center.

Another complement to the Midwifery Program was the addition of on-site maternal fetal medicine specialists, allowing health center patients to conveniently access these services without traveling to other facilities. The program also spread to Plainfield Health Center's ElizabethPort campus, welcoming a full-time nurse-midwife and 70 new patients.

Most notably, the Midwifery Program continues to positively affect health outcomes, reducing the incidence of low birth weight, pre-term deliveries and cesarean sections. "The federal government is recognizing the contributions that nurse-midwives are making, not only with regard to quality of care but also favorably impacting important national indicators," said Ms. White-Walker.

"We've also been successful in getting women to the health center sooner and more often, seeing 64 percent of maternity patients during their first trimester and assisting more women with gynecologic, family planning and primary health services," she added.

"Of all my pregnancies, my very best experience was with Plainfield Health Center," asserted Ms. Cargill. "It was more loving than clinical, and really made me feel special." ■

## PHC Tackling Pediatric Obesity *Continued from page 1*

New Jersey. "We teach the kids that fitness is fun, while developing their strength, endurance and confidence."

Under the supervision of a registered nurse, the children also learn about proper nutrition, portion control and making healthier choices. Da'meeisha, for example, has revamped her eating habits — snacking on carrots instead of potato chips, substituting salads for macaroni-and-cheese, and replacing soda with water. "I eat more fruits and vegetables, and less candy," said Da'meeisha.

Da'meeisha has also made great strides toward her fitness goals. When she started the program, she had trouble running one lap around the gymnasium. Now she's timing her sprints, jumping rope, playing kick-ball and doing sit-ups. Best of all, she's taking fitness home, exercising in her backyard and riding her bicycle.

Da'meeisha's success reflects the core goals of the program. "The keys are behavior modification, self-management, and helping children understand that they are in control of their bodies," asserted Dr. Walsh. "They are given the tools and support to integrate fitness into their daily routines and approach adolescence with a better chance of avoiding obesity."

The RWJF grant has been instrumental in allowing the program to expand, spreading it to the fourth grade, doubling the number of participants within one year, and adding new elements to the curriculum, including a nutrition course for parents run by Rutgers University Cooperative. "We hope to eventually involve grades K through five and offer Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun to all elementary schools in Plainfield," said Dr. Walsh.

**2** For information about supporting this community endeavor and joining the fight against pediatric obesity, please contact Andrea West, Executive Director, Plainfield Health Center Foundation, at (908) 753-6401, ext. 195. ■

# A Head Start for Oral Care

## Grant Funds Early Intervention Program

Baby's first tooth is a memorable event, eliciting delightful praise as parents revel in the exciting milestone. Plainfield Health Center (PHC) is trying to carry that enthusiasm into the preschool years and beyond with a new, grant-funded Pediatric Preventative Oral Health Program that promises children a lifetime of healthier smiles.

According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, early dental care gives children the best chance for preventing oral disease and joining the cavity-free generation. "The first few years of life represent a critical juncture in oral health," remarked Janice Bell, DMD, PHC. Many parents mistakenly feel that primary teeth aren't important, although they help children chew and digest properly, impact speech development, and hold space in the jaws for permanent teeth. A healthy mouth even affects a young child's self-esteem, as decaying or prematurely lost teeth may cause unnecessary discomfort or embarrassment.

Above all, clinical research clearly establishes oral health status as a predictor of general health. Dental disease can compromise other areas of the body and lead to serious medical complications, including heart disease and stroke.

PHC's Pediatric Preventative Oral Health Program, funded by Community Foundation of New Jersey and Health Care Foundation of New Jersey, was launched to give area children a running start on preventative dentistry and good oral health. The outreach initiative targets children between two-and-a-half and five years of age in the Plainfield and ElizabethPort communities, with an emphasis on family education, oral screenings and early intervention.

Since January, Dr. Bell, along with Maryellen Mascolo, CDA, RDH, Dental Office Manager, and Dental Assistants Jessica Reyes and Raul Ortiz, have traveled to several area preschools, providing screenings and educating hundreds of children and parents on the importance of oral health. They engage the youths with fun games, interactive activities and creative strategies for learning healthy dental practices — such as brushing, flossing, eating nutritiously and visiting the dentist. "We read them stories, show videos and even dance to a song called Brush Rap," said Ms. Mascolo. "It really captures their attention and gets them excited about taking care of their teeth." At the same time, Dr. Bell has hosted informational seminars for parents, fostering a strong partnership toward preventative dental care.

"This program gives us another opportunity to improve the oral health of our children, most of whom have never been to a dentist," said Jackie Lynch, Health Manager of Head Start, a federally funded preschool program for indigent families in the greater Plainfield community. "We hope to bring this program to as many of our sites as possible."

Children without a family dentist receive complete dental exams and treatment at Plainfield Health Center, which is the only reduced-fee dental care provider for the uninsured in Union County and already serves over 300 pediatric patients. Added Dr. Bell, "Our goal is to reach 800 preschool children through this program, encouraging an early commitment to healthy dental habits and preventing the onset of disease." ■

# Give Kids a Smile Day!

An astounding 178 children were all smiles on February 2, 2005 after flocking to Plainfield Health Center for its third consecutive "Give Kids a Smile Day." This enormously successful outreach event is linked to the American Dental Association's National Children's Dental Access Day, designed to improve oral health care among low-income and medically underserved youth populations.



*Cynthia Dawkins, RDH, examines a program participant.*

Teaming up with dentists across the country, PHC provided free dental exams and cleanings to children between the ages of three and twelve. "Give Kids a Smile Day" has now served more than 350 area children, many of whom have initiated a regular preventative oral care program. ■



# Plainfield Health Center Foundation Marks Third Year of Success

Vision is critical to the longevity of any organization. It requires the insight to look beyond today's challenges and toward tomorrow's opportunities, the foresight to identify avenues of greatest promise, and the determination to pursue them successfully. Those were the fundamental forces that led to the establishment of the Plainfield Health Center Foundation. By all measures, it was an investment in the future — of the health center and the community.

The Foundation was formed in 2001 as a fundraising arm for Plainfield Health Center (PHC), exclusively dedicated to generating and managing funds for the benefit of PHC and its mission of serving the health needs of area residents. Under this model, the Foundation operates independently from the health center, allowing it to orchestrate all philanthropic efforts, expand the donor base and position Plainfield Health Center as a charity of choice for individuals, corporations and foundations.

A wise investment it has been! In three years time, the Plainfield Health Center Foundation has raised in excess of \$1.5 million. "The Foundation opened new doors and increased our presence within the philanthropic community. We have identified and cultivated major new grantors while launching a more comprehensive fundraising program, including special events and annual donor appeals," stated Oliver Bartlett, Chairman, Plainfield Health Center Foundation. "With private funding, Plainfield Health Center can be more than a safety net provider. We can deliver creative, far-reaching programs that allow us to extend our core services, eliminate health disparities and expand access to care — programs that we would not be able to provide without this additional revenue."

The Foundation has endowed many new initiatives that address pressing health issues affecting PHC's patient population, primarily focused on disease management and intervention, education and outreach. Those most greatly impacting the community include the following:

- Assisted Living Without Walls, an innovative case-management service enriching the quality of life for area seniors;
- Pediatric Preventative Oral Health Program, an early intervention endeavor promoting family education, dental screenings and good oral health among pre-schoolers;
- Get Fit, Stay Fit, Have Fun, a unique pediatric fitness and obesity prevention initiative that protects children from this alarming national epidemic;
- Midwifery Program, a patient-centered model of obstetric and gynecological care that offers a comprehensive, holistic approach to wellness; and
- Diabetes Program, a collaborative, self-management approach to improving the health status of those living with this prevalent disease;

Funding secured by the Foundation has also enabled PHC to acquire progressive medical equipment and technologies, strengthen its specialty services, and modernize and expand its facilities. As an ideal example, capital raised and infused into PHC's newest satellite, the E-Port Health Center in Elizabeth, has allowed its revitalization. Located in the only other federally designated medically underserved area in Union County, the health center is now serving thousands of local residents who had not been receiving primary medical or dental care.

The Plainfield Health Center Foundation is tremendously grateful to its dedicated, growing family of benefactors who have demonstrated their commitment to improving the health status of our communities. With your continued support, the next three years will outshine those past, realizing PHC's vision of eliminating barriers to quality care and becoming a more valuable, comprehensive health resource for those it serves. ■

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*Please accept our sincere apology for any misspellings or omissions. If this is the case, please contact the Plainfield Health Center Foundation on (908) 753-6401, extension 211 so that we may correct our records.*

## New Fetal Monitors Aid At-Risk Patients

Johnson and Johnson Pharmaceutical Services has helped to enhance obstetrical care for at-risk patients by granting \$10,000 toward state-of-the-art fetal monitoring systems for PHC and its E-Port satellite facility in Elizabeth.

Approximately 15 percent of the health centers' midwifery pre-natal patients are at-risk due to multiple gestations, underlying medical conditions, and other contributing factors. Such risks require them to undergo non-invasive fetal stress testing, which can safely detect fetal growth, movement, heart rate and additional information that can facilitate a healthier pregnancy and delivery.

Importantly, the new equipment enables obstetrical patients to receive these necessary tests at their original point of care rather than traveling to outside providers, which often presents financial and transportation barriers. Thanks to Johnson & Johnson, we expect the new acquisitions to improve compliance and outcomes for dozens of patients and their babies. ■

# Just For Seniors

If there is anything more important than aging gracefully, it's aging healthfully! Nearly 150 seniors from Union and Middlesex Counties visited South Plainfield Senior Center on November 10, 2004 for an all-day Seniors Health Fair sponsored by Plainfield Health Center's Assisted Living Without Walls Program.

Participants received an array of complimentary health screenings, including evaluations for hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol, hearing, vision, podiatry, dental and HIV. Guests also traveled among 30 exhibits showcasing community services, social programs, and medical products as well as educational information about chronic diseases and other aging related issues. Door prizes and nutritious refreshments fueled the crowd's enthusiasm for various health lectures presented by Plainfield Health Center physicians, as many set their bodies in motion with fitness activities coordinated by the YWCA of Central New Jersey and the Arthritis Foundation.

Assisted Living Without Walls is an integrated case management program designed to promote the wellness and independence of area seniors. Primarily funded by grants from the Fannie E. Rippel Foundation, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Health Care Foundation of New Jersey and the Plainfield Foundation, the initiative premiered in June 2003 to provide health-minded interventions to the community's rapidly expanding elderly population. The program focuses on disease management and interventions that reduce senior citizen's risks for hospitalization and improve their quality of life. Most recently, the program introduced free transportation to medical appointments and began offering mobility assistance equipment to those in need, thanks to an additional grant from the Henry H. Kessler Foundation.

"Well into our second year, I believe we have achieved our goals, providing a wonderful service for seniors," said Nikki Vergara, RN, Senior Nurse Case Manager. The program has reached nearly 600 seniors with over 250 enrolled. ■

## Tee Time!

### *First Annual Golf Tourney Reaps \$26,000*

The first annual Plainfield Health Center Foundation Golf Classic, held on September 27, 2004 at the Galloping Hill Golf Course in Kenilworth, was a bonafide winner. The sun shined brilliantly as players enjoyed a relaxing day on the greens while serving an honorable cause. The benefit generated over \$26,000 to support increased access to health care in Plainfield, Elizabeth and surrounding communities.

The day's festivities began with a 12:45 p.m. shotgun and concluded with a twilight dinner and awards ceremony, including a tribute to Dewey and Roland Brown, Sr. Among the first African Americans inducted into the U.S. Golfing Association, these golfing pioneers are credited with breaking down racial barriers within the sport and paving the way for future golfing legends.

Accolades were also extended to PNC Bank and other event sponsors that contributed to the Classic's success, including PSE&G, Gene and Shelley Enlow, Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center and AmeriGroup.

The Plainfield Health Center Foundation looks forward to planning a second annual golf classic this Fall. Details will be coming soon! ■

## Plainfield Health Center Mourns the Death of Leland Michael



On October 24th, Plainfield Health Center (PHC), along with many other non-profit organizations lost a dear friend, Leland Michael. Mr. Michael passed away at his home after a long bout with cancer.

Mr. Michael moved from Harlem to Greenburgh, New York as a young boy and by the time he reached high school his artistic talents were apparent. He sketched, made jewelry and had a number of art exhibits to his credit. After graduating high school, Mr. Michael helped to transform the Greenburgh Youth Center, now the Theodore D. Young Community Center, into a haven for talented youngsters in the community. After studying at Fashion Institute of Technology, he began a twenty-year career designing textiles and clothing before founding his own company, The Design Group, Ltd., which was a line of Afrocentric bed and bath accessories marketed by Dan River. Mr. Michael along with his partner, Brian Stanley, then founded and operated the catering business, Great Expectations, in Plainfield. He became a board member and chef instructor for New Brunswick based Elijah's Promise, a soup kitchen that evolved to provide job training for prospective chefs.

Mr. Michael was best known to many as a wonderful, involved friend of the community. He was a loyal volunteer at Residents Supporting Victorian Plainfield, Friends of Sleepy Hollow, the Plainfield Public Library, and of course the Plainfield Health Center. Here, at the Plainfield Health Center/Plainfield Health Center Foundation he was part of the creative team behind the annual Gala and Silent Auction, he ran the annual Holiday Open House, and was a 'go to' person for any volunteer assignment. He cared deeply about PHC and its patients and he gave of his time and talent without reservation. He will be missed. ■



**Plainfield Health Center**

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**PHC Health Line** is produced by the Plainfield Health Center Foundation for those who support PHC in its mission of providing high quality, customer-oriented and cost effective primary health care services in a safe and accessible environment to the residents of the city of Plainfield and surrounding communities. Cardinal Health Center, The Healthy Place, and E-Port Community Health Center are operating units directed and governed by Plainfield Neighborhood Health Services Corporation, a non-profit organization incorporated in 1969.

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**Cardinal Health Center**  
 Plainfield High School Campus, Park Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060  
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**The Healthy Place**  
 Washington Elementary School  
 427 Darrow Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060  
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PLAINFIELD HEALTH CENTER

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 FRIDAY, MAY 6  
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