



WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Williamson County Healthy Hearts Coalition Members Attend National Forums to Combat Chronic Diseases and Promote Healthy Communities

August 5, 2009 (Williamson County) –

Recently members of the Williamson County Healthy Hearts Coalition returned home from attending a national action institute in Denver, Colorado on July 21, 2009 to July 23, 2009. While at this institute they learned firsthand from national and local experts about strategies to combat obesity and other chronic diseases in our community. These community members are part of Community Health Action Response Teams, or CHARTs, who have mobilized to address health concerns in the Georgetown community. Our community was one of 13 who received funding in January 2009 from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) and supported by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NACDD is one of five national partners who receive support from the CDC to provide direct technical assistance to these communities. In all, 43 communities received ACHIEVE funding.

The Williamson County CHART is part of an initiative called Action Communities for Health, Innovation and EnVironmental Change (ACHIEVE). ACHIEVE is a national, state and local partnership that works to advance leadership and action to reduce chronic diseases and the related risk factors. Williamson County CHART members and partners are focusing on improving the environments where people live, work, play, and learn. Promoting actions and advancements around physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco, as well as improving health systems and other systems of care that provide services to people with chronic diseases will give people of all ages the support needed to lead healthier lives in our community.

Presenters included national leaders in the fight against chronic diseases. Dr. Wayne Giles, Director, Division of Adult and Community Health at the CDC, kicked off the program with information on the burden to our society caused by chronic diseases and the critical role of chronic disease management. Prevention Institute policy guru Larry Cohen, MS, provided sessions on building local policy and organizations practice change into community work. Mark Fenton, noted author, television personality, and walking enthusiast, highlighted the built

environment and how it impacts health, and led participants through a walking tour of Denver. Local community members from around the US provided practical examples of solutions in schools, the worksite, health care settings, the community, including community-based institutions and community planning efforts.

Our CHART members will continue to develop plans to promote policy and environmental changes and long-term planning that support healthy living such as healthy school vending and food offerings, access to parks and walking and biking trails, improved sidewalks and farmers markets, as well as systems improvements for people suffering from chronic diseases. “By building healthy communities and supporting people in healthy living we can make a difference in the health of our nation” said Dr. Wayne Giles. Local CHART member and Director of Health Services for Georgetown ISD, Mary McKenna, further replied that “We have the opportunity to systematically make community based improvements to support families, businesses and employees to begin to reduce the economic impact of chronic illness in Georgetown and the rest of Williamson County by uniting our talent and knowledge. This is an exciting time of possibilities using people and resources now energized and supported by the ACHIEVE initiative.” For more information on the ACHIEVE Initiative visit www.achievecommunities.org.

For more information about ACHIEVE or the Williamson County CHART (also called the Healthy Hearts Coalition) please contact Cynthia Guerrero at cguerrero@wcchd.org or call 512-248-3252.

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