

# Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.

## **Black Health Empowerment Project: An Opportunity for Collaboration and Advocacy in Addressing Obesity in African American Communities**

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# Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.

- Serves as a policy-oriented catalyst to educate future leaders and promote collaboration to affect positive and sustainable change in the African American community
- Offers programs, communications and research in three core areas: Leadership Education, Economic Development, and Public Health
- Established in 1976 as a section 501(c) (3) non-profit, non-partisan organization



# BHEP Rationale

- Need to address growing rates of overweight and obesity among African-Americans – across age, geographical, socio-economic lines
- Relationship between overweight/obesity and chronic diseases (hypertension, type II diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, respiratory diseases, cancer)
- Ability to impact these risk factors through policy and legislation



# BHEP Overview

- Multi-city obesity tour implemented in 2005
- Presented as a community health day in the districts of Congressional Black Caucus Members
- Since its kick-off, 13 cities visited across the U.S. and U.S. Virgin Islands



# Program Goals

- Educate African Americans about health consequences linked to overweight and obesity
  - Encourage African Americans to achieve and maintain a healthy weight (amount of body fat)
- Encourage African Americans to *eat, move and test for health*, and to *make wellness a family affair*



# Program Objectives

- Raise awareness of obesity and other chronic disease risk factors among African American adults and youth
- Motivate adults and children to adopt healthy eating habits and to participate in regular physical activity
- Encourage African Americans to be proactive in using healthcare providers and other health resources



# BHEP Event: Healthy Living Forum

## MORNING SEGMENT FEATURES:

- Welcome remarks by CBC Member
- Interactive sessions on fitness, nutrition and obesity for adults
- Nutrition and fitness workshops for children
- Sessions led by local health professionals and physicians from BlackWomensHealth.com



# BHEP Event: Health & Fitness Expo

## AFTERNOON SEGMENT FEATURES:

- Free health screenings
- Health education materials provided by exhibitors
- Fitness and cooking demonstrations
- Children's Activity Zone
- "Ask the Experts" Zone
- Wellness-promoting giveaway items
- Entertainment





# BHEP Evaluation

- Health status survey → demographics; general health; diet & nutrition; physical activity; weight; health insurance
- Participant evaluation survey → morning session & overall event (including afternoon program)
- Limitations
  - Voluntary
  - Health status survey self-reported
  - Incomplete/inaccurate data
  - Only post-event data collected



# Successes

- Engaged more than 3,000 African-American adults and youth
- Connected event participants to more than 260 local health agencies and organizations
- Positive participant feedback
  - Events did “very well” in raising awareness of obesity and other chronic disease risk factors
  - Events did “very well” in providing an overview of health-related issues important to attendees
  - Attendees willing to try demonstrations on their own and to share information gained with family



# Challenges

- Identifying and engaging key community stakeholders in all markets
- Raising awareness but not necessarily impacting behavior
- Presenting program exclusively in CBC member districts
- Gaining sponsor support for aligning program goals, objectives with CBCF's mission



# Lessons Learned

- Active participation of key local partners required to influence community involvement
- Health and fitness events increasingly offered at the local level (particularly in major urban cities)
- Importance of holding event in underserved communities
- Selection of partnering sponsor significant
- Member buy-in critical → difficult under current ethics rules and with competing local needs



# Next Steps

- Complete current iteration of program in spring 2008
- Review program – plan next iteration with current partners, look at how program can better fit CBCF's mission
- Determine evaluation goals and implementation strategies
- Secure funding



# How Local Organizations Can Become Involved

- Contact your representative – e-mail, letters, testimonies
- Collaborate across local organizations to define policy opportunities to support positive behaviors
- Incorporate opportunities for civic engagement in interventions – local, state, federal levels
- Educate elected officials about the relevance of primary preventive care, access to care & timely screening services
- Contact CBCF to express interest in having an event in your area



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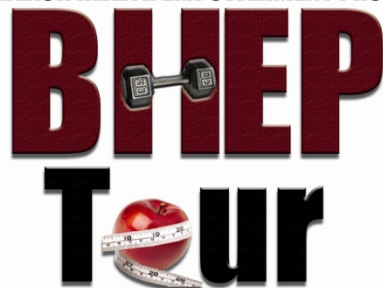
For more information:

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Visit our website at [www.bheptour.org](http://www.bheptour.org)

**Thank you!**

THE BLACK HEALTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECT



A national obesity awareness and  
health promotion tour produced by the  
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.



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