

# Chiropractic and National Public Health Week

## FIVE YEARS OF BRIDGE-BUILDING IN THE COMMUNITY

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For several years, members of the American Public Health Association (APHA) Chiropractic Health Care Section have been organizing events for National Public Health Week (NPHW) in their local communities. Each year, APHA leaders select and promote a theme for the year. Examples include tobacco use cessation; overweight and obesity; healthy aging; healthy kids; and emergency preparedness.

As you can see, these are simple, relevant themes, important to anyone who cares about health. Chiropractors across the nation are encouraged to develop and conduct activities related to the annual NPHW themes, providing a service to their patients and their communities. In this article, we will share five examples of chiropractic involvement in NPHW, and how this effort has built bridges between one college and dozens of local organizations and businesses. We hope this article will inspire more chiropractors and colleges to take an active role in NPHW and build their own community collaborations.

**Tobacco Use Cessation, 2003:** In a humble beginning, Palmer College of Chiropractic teamed up with the local and national American Heart Association and American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society, and the World Federation of Chiropractic to acquire educational materials and posters encouraging cessation of tobacco use. The posters and materials were disseminated around the campus and in the Palmer clinics. Educational materials and community resources were offered to patients throughout NPHW and beyond. This simple, low-cost event sent a clear message: Chiropractors are engaged and active members of the mainstream health community.

**Overweight and Obesity, 2004:** An educational presentation was offered to Palmer College faculty and clinicians to raise awareness of the impact of overweight and obesity on health. Clinicians were each given a colorful body-mass index (BMI) chart to use in screening patients for BMI information. Simple steps were offered on each BMI card for sensible weight reduction for those patients whose weight was negatively impacting their health. Throughout the week, NPHW messages were disseminated to all faculty members, related to the theme of obesity and its affect on health and the health care system. This simple event also was completed with almost no overhead expense and continued to deliver the message: Chiropractors care about public health issues, and are taking part in meeting our nation's health challenges head-on. Due to chiropractic participation in 2003-2004 NPHW events, which were publicized on the APHA's Web site and elsewhere, the local health department asked to be included when the next NPHW events were being planned.

**Healthy Aging, 2005:** This event involved partnering with a local hospital, a local visiting nurses' association, a radiology group, aging services organizations, health and legal professionals, and several age-related community businesses. Three days of events were planned and included workshops on alternative healing; healthy eating; exercise and aging; health promotion and prevention; legal issues; durable power of attorney and living wills; financial fitness (retirement planning); oral health and aging; and adult day care. In addition to the educational components of

NPHW events, complimentary health screenings were offered through the local hospital and nursing associations, the chiropractic college, a radiology group and a senior center. Additionally, a mini computer course was offered to assist elderly citizens who wished to become active online. Promotion for the event was broadcast on a local talk show (an affiliate of NBC), and press releases were sent out to all local media to invite the general public to attend. One-day events were hosted on the Palmer college campus, one day was hosted within the hospital facility, and the final day was held at a local community city hall.

Another valuable offering to all participants was a free packet called a "File of Life." This program was initiated by a local organization called Senior Voice, the largest organized group for the concerns of the aging population in the immediate region. Gloria Fisher, coordinator of the Senior Voice program, elicits the sponsorship of several community agencies to purchase large quantities of these packets. They are part of a national program in which anyone can participate. These packets have a magnet on the back that allows them to be attached to a refrigerator, so EMS personnel can immediately locate them upon arrival. Inside, there is a fold-out card that allows for the recording of all pertinent health information, including any medications or allergies that EMS personnel would need to know in the event they had to work with someone who was unresponsive. There is also a wallet version inside the packet that can be placed in a purse or wallet.

These are an invaluable tool not only for the senior population, but also for anyone of any age who is dealing with significant health issues. Also, it is something that anyone can benefit from, as emergency contact information can be listed on the same card. Reaching loved ones when there is a crisis is invaluable. These are free to the general public, and all EMS personnel have been trained extensively to interface with them.

This event was featured in *The Nation's Health* newspaper and appeared in various campus publications.

Healthy Kids, 2006: A partnership was formed with the same local hospital system, health departments, the University of Iowa's College of Dentistry's Pediatric Dental Association, and several other organizations for the benefit of children. This event was a free Healthy Kids Health Fair open to the public of the bi-state (Iowa and Illinois) Quad-City community. The health fair, held on the Palmer College campus, provided educational booths and seminars for parents and children to raise awareness about health issues and services available in their community. The event included a yoga class for kids called "Better Partners, Better Parents," a presentation on the science behind chiropractic care for kids and a final workshop on how to prevent sports injuries in children.

Participants also enjoyed several interactive activities, including a health department-sponsored hand-washing station, a chiropractic backpack safety station, an "X-ray vision" display, and a posture screening station. Dental students put on a puppet show to educate children on proper dental care. A local salon offered \$5 haircuts, with proceeds going to the National Down Syndrome Society. Several people also participated in the "Locks of Love" program, donating their hair to make wigs for those in need. The students of the college also participated in a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship donated by the college. Once again, the information about the event and highlights on NPHW were featured on the local NBC affiliate talk show and covered in local newspapers, in addition to *The Nation's Health*.

Emergency Preparedness, 2007: With the advent of such natural disasters as Hurricane Katrina and the terrible tsunami in Southeast Asia, the APHA selected a focus on the responsibility that we all have to prepare our own families and businesses for worst-case scenarios that none of us want to experience personally, but that affect us all equally. Disaster is known as the great equalizer,

and the partners chosen this year included the American Red Cross and Medic EMS. Events were held on one day only, with two separate programs offered at staggered times throughout the day. The Red Cross presented its program, "Be Red Cross Ready." A 45-minute PowerPoint presentation was accompanied by handouts with a focus on educating people on the three key steps to follow in efforts to prepare for a disaster, including: how to build a disaster kit, how to create a plan, and how to stay informed. The Red Cross generously donated two disaster kits for each session. These were given away via a random raffle, using anonymous tickets given at the beginning of each session to every participant in the room.

Medic EMS also was on hand to discuss the role of emergency personnel in the event of a disaster and to provide "File of Life" packets. Continued coverage was provided on the local talk show again, in addition to promotions to the clinic patient base and in local newspapers.

Participation in NPHW has shown chiropractic in a favorable light, taking the lead in the public health effort in these community-based programs. The relationships built over the past five years have enriched Palmer College, the profession, the community and the patients we serve. We strongly encourage chiropractors in the field and at other chiropractic institutions to watch the APHA Web site ([www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)) for the upcoming year's theme and to develop their own NPHW events. Such programs are an honest, ethical way to build relationships with other health organizations within our communities, and to serve the health and educational needs of the local community.

For more information about National Public Health Week or for ideas on how to get involved, feel free to communicate with us ([julie.johnson@palmer.edu](mailto:julie.johnson@palmer.edu) and [lisa.killinger@palmer.edu](mailto:lisa.killinger@palmer.edu)). We also encourage chiropractors to join the American Public Health Association, the nation's and the world's oldest and largest public health organization. We must keep our fingers on the pulse of the nation's health. There is no better way than through the APHA.

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