

# CALL TO ACTION

Wellness Symposium attracts hundreds motivated to improving city's well being  
By Jonathan H. Lack

More than 800 leaders from the private, public, not-for-profit, medical and academic sectors exchanged ideas on a myriad of healthcare issues during the recently concluded Houston Wellness Association (HWA) 2008 Wellness Symposium.

Held at Minute Maid Park Union Station and featuring title sponsors CIGNA and KelseyCare, the symposium covered topics such as obesity, work site wellness and the future of healthcare delivery in the U.S. Leaders like Dr. Mehmet Oz, vice chair and professor of surgery at Columbia University and best selling author, gathered to cover hot topics, issues, trends and to offer solutions to our nation's current



healthcare crisis. Oz, also a regular on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Oprah & Friends" radio program, is also partnering with the Recipe for Success Foundation in an effort to combat childhood obesity.

The response to action was overwhelming. Houston Mayor Bill White received a standing ovation after his keynote speech at the Worksite Wellness Conference, as did Dr. Robert Austin at the inaugural Obesity Summit. Feedback and evaluations from attendees and sponsors has been very favorable and offers productive suggestions for programming for future symposiums.

Paid attendance exceeded last year's inaugural Worksite Wellness Conference by 34 percent. The fact that so many stakeholders came together last week in Houston—especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike and given the current financial crisis the country is facing—indicates that the business and medical community is beginning to understand that prevention is going to have to be a



HWA representative Nick Martinez, HWA executive Bill Krull, Recipe For Success founder Gracie Cavnar, Dr. Mehmet Oz, BCM's Molly Bray and HWA Executive Director Jonathan Lack

major part of the solution to our community's healthcare crisis. Leaders from all industries are seeing big returns on their programs, both in financial and life-changing results.

The event included the HWA's inaugural Obesity Summit and the second-annual Worksite Wellness Conference. The Obesity Summit focused on the impact of obesity from a multitude of perspectives, including personal, economic and environmental levels. The second-annual Work Site Wellness Conference covered the latest information on improving employee health to increase productivity and profits.



Judson Robinson, III, CEO of the Houston Area Urban League

The Houston Wellness Association is a not-for-profit (501C6) organization with a mission to advance the health and well being of the Houston community and the economic vitality of its wellness sector with a vision to transform Houston into a widely modeled, innovative city for healthy living.

The next Wellness Symposium is scheduled to be held January 15-16, 2010 to coincide with the Chevron Houston Marathon. A call for speakers will be posted soon. The Houston Wellness Association is currently taking requests for potential exhibitors and sponsors. Inquiries should be directed to Bill Krull, membership and development director, via email ([bkrull@houstonwellness.org](mailto:bkrull@houstonwellness.org)) or phone, (713-357-9515).



Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, professor Selina Ahmed and Dr. Robert Moore

*Jonathan H. Lack is the founding executive director of the Houston Wellness Association. [Houstonwellness.org](http://Houstonwellness.org).  
Photography by Vicky Pink*