

GRASS ROOTS HEALTH

Mayor's Wellness Council launches neighborhood programs
By William B. Baun

In just three years, the Mayor's Wellness Council has taken Houston from the most obese city to the tenth spot in the *Men's Fitness* magazine fattest city ranking.

The mission of the council is to leverage the auspices of the mayor's office in collaboration with public, private and non-profit sectors in the Greater Houston area to encourage and motivate Houstonians to make daily health and wellness choices and commitments that will enhance the quality of life and maximize personal potential.

In 2006, the council developed the Houston Wellness Association (HWA) to support the growth of the wellness industry in the Houston area by "doing good by doing wellness." This novel approach was designed to bring more attention, interest, choice and greater opportunity to improve the health and wellness through collaborative efforts.



The council has adopted a six-dimension model of wellness that provides a holistic approach to healthy living. We believe that wellness is a lifelong journey that we share with many others and the six dimensions work independently and together.

Many of the wellness opportunities in Houston that are supported by a wide assortment of associations and organizations are like best kept secrets, so the council is working hard to better promote and communicate these opportunities.

This past year we adopted two major goals: 1) Support the city of Houston's wellness director with resources to build a wellness culture that provides employees opportunities to grow their wellness knowledge, skills and commitments to be healthy; and 2) Implement a childhood obesity intervention pilot called CAN DO Houston (Children and Neighborhoods Defeat Obesity) in three communities to mobilize existing holistic community-based resources that address phys-



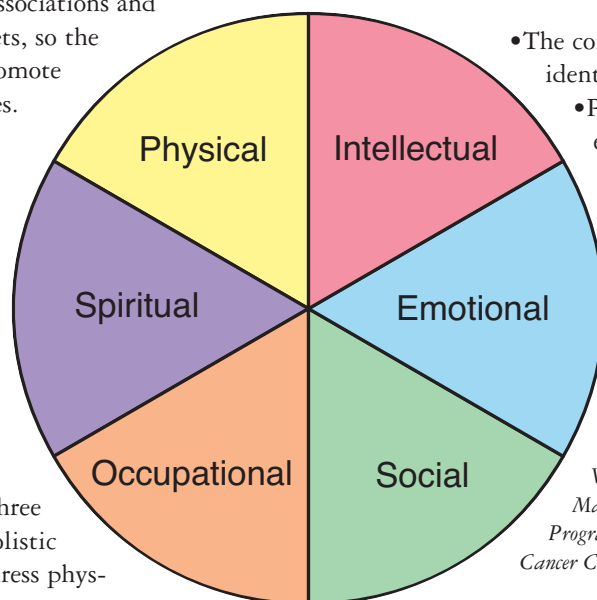
ical activity, nutrition and healthy minds. The CAN DO Houston intervention will be implemented in Independence Heights, Sunnyside and Magnolia super neighborhoods and involves a collaborative effort of many organizations.

Wellness is about small steps, not large leaps. The vision that Mayor White has given the council is for Houston to be recognized as a healthy and well city in which to live, work and raise a family. This can only be accomplished if Houstonians work to promote, support and ensure wellness opportunities exist in their neighborhoods and communities.

The council has created the concept of Neighborhood Wellness Teams to recognize and help grow neighborhood and community wellness efforts. A Neighborhood Wellness Team could be a community that has decided to plant a vegetable garden to increase its access to fresh vegetables. It could be several families that live around an outdoor park that have agreed to keep the trash picked up or start neighborhood walking groups. Take a look at the "Wellness Wheel" and create a team to support one of the dimensions.

How can you set up a Neighborhood Wellness Team? You can go to the Get Moving Houston website Getmovinghouston.com and send us an email that includes:

- The contact information for two individuals identified as team leaders.
- Provide a purpose statement (a good example is to start a community garden).
- Provide two to three goals that measure the success of the purpose.



We plan to recognize each Neighborhood Wellness Team for its efforts and hold an annual meeting where teams can share ideas about successful projects.

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