

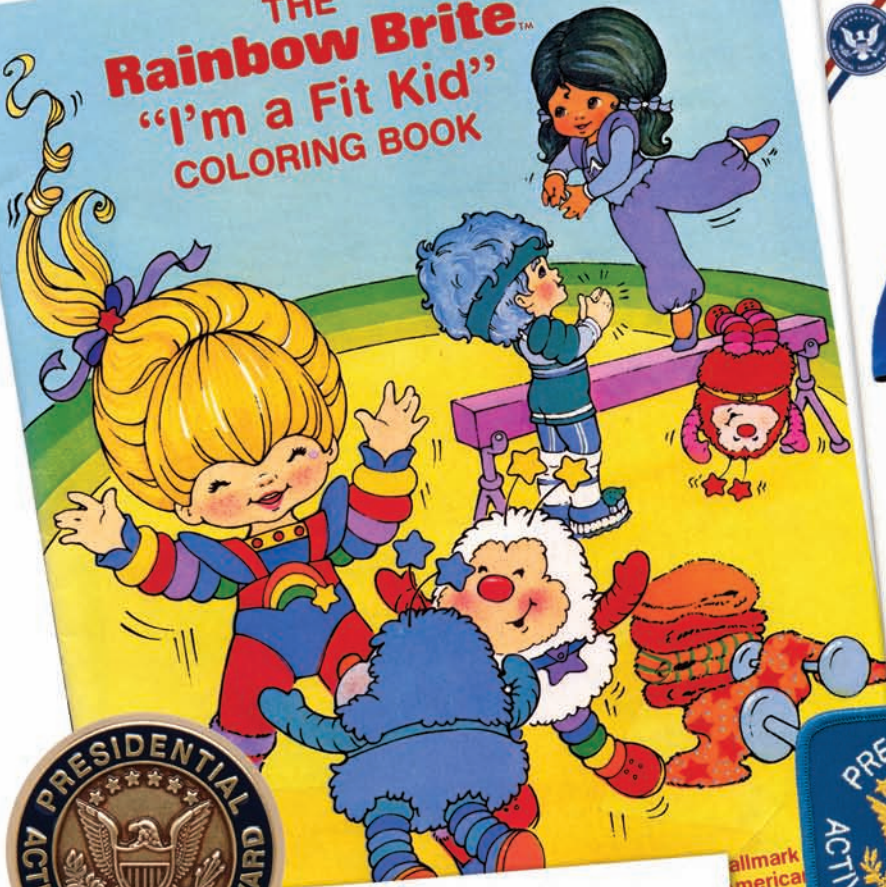
# PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS & SPORTS

The First 50 Years: 1956-2006





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COLORING BOOK



**Proceedings**

**THE NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE  
ON FITNESS**

APRIL 6-7, 1984  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



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2005-2006



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**PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS**



A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT FROM  
THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
AND THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

FALL 2000



The President's Council  
On Physical Fitness and Sports 1985



National School Population Fitness Survey

Physical Education  
A Performance Checklist

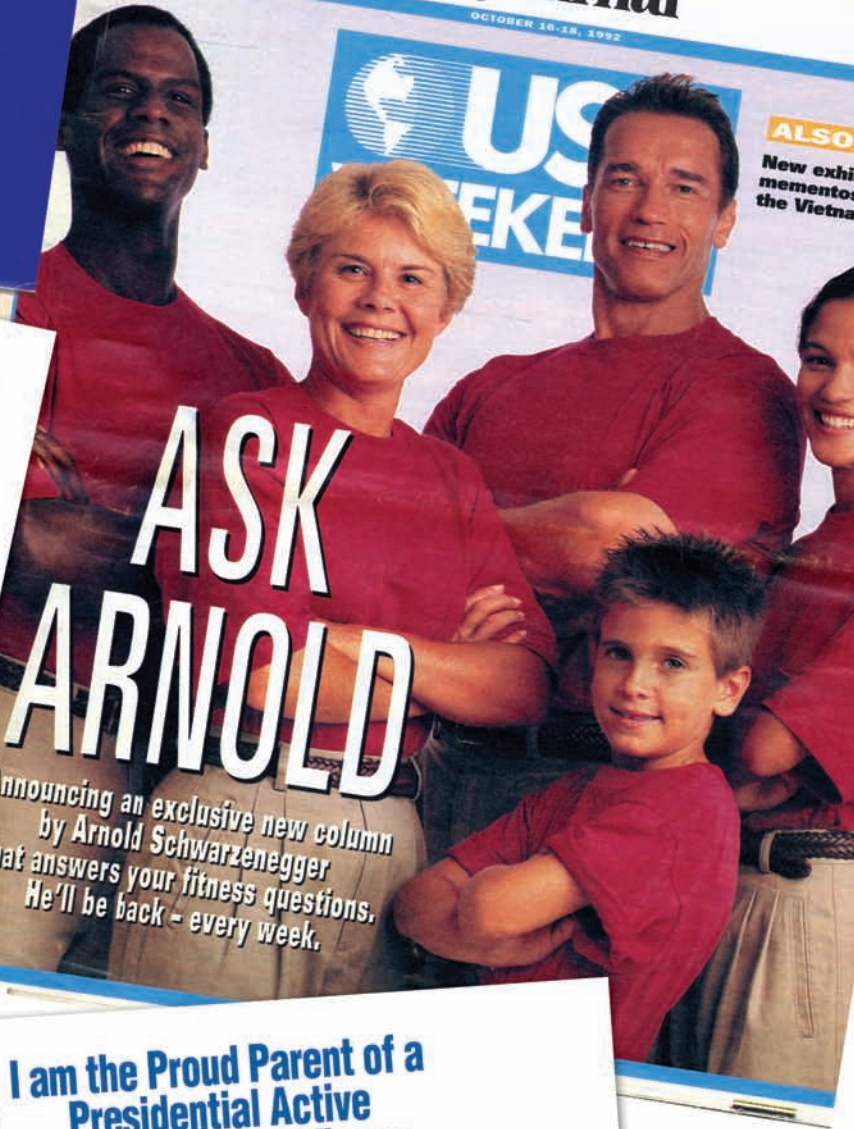


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and Sports

THE Journal  
OCTOBER 18-24, 1992

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ARNOLD

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by Arnold Schwarzenegger  
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THE  
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ON YOUTH  
FITNESS  
SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS  
JUNE 8-9, 1984



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I am the Proud Parent of a  
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Lifestyle Award Winner





## National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2006

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

For 50 years, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports has helped individuals, schools, communities, businesses, and organizations promote healthy lifestyles. During this year's National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, we celebrate the Council's 50th anniversary and underscore our Nation's strong commitment to health, physical activity, and fitness.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower founded the President's Council on Youth Fitness in 1956 to encourage America's youth to make fitness a priority. He wrote that year, "Our young people must be physically as well as mentally and spiritually prepared for American citizenship." The Council later became the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, including people of all ages and abilities and promoting fitness through sports and games.

Today, the Council continues to play an important role in promoting fitness and healthy living in America. My HealthierUS Initiative provides simple steps to help citizens live longer and better lives, and millions of young people and adults have participated in the President's Challenge awards program. The Council's website, [fitness.gov](http://fitness.gov), has information about these programs and other ways Americans can improve their health through physical activity. By exercising regularly and maintaining healthy eating habits, individuals can feel better and reduce their risk of chronic health conditions like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. An active lifestyle also creates opportunities for friends and family to spend time together and enjoy various forms of exercise, such as biking, hiking, and team sports. The medical benefits, increased self-confidence, and stress reduction that can come from athletic activity help contribute to a healthier, more productive Nation.

I urge children, teens, and all Americans to make time every day for exercise and to encourage family, friends, and neighbors to live healthier lives by participating in physical fitness activities. As President Kennedy said at the 1961 Youth Fitness Conference, "We do not want in the United States a nation of spectators. We want a nation of participants in the vigorous life."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2006 as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. I call upon the people of the United States to make daily exercise a priority. I encourage individuals, community organizations, and schools to celebrate with physical and athletic activities and to work toward the great national goal of an active, fit America.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. W. Bush".



WILLIAM H. FRIST, M.D.  
TENNESSEE

<http://frist.senate.gov>

COMMITTEES:

Finance  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
Rules and Administration

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4205

February, 2006

Dear Friends,

I'm proud to join all Americans in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Since its inception in 1956 by President Eisenhower, the Council has raised the national awareness about the value and benefit of embracing a healthy and active lifestyle.

Obesity, perhaps more so than any other health risk factor, impacts our overall quality of life. Its prevalence has hit record levels in this country in recent years and remains one of the leading causes for increased risk for heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Raising public awareness of a healthy diet, the benefits of physical fitness and the health risks associated with obesity is essential. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports plays an important role in raising our awareness of the risks of inactivity and motivating us to stay fit.

The Council's constructive, positive and proactive approach has inspired generations to discover the joys of physical activity and fitness. My father, a physician himself, used to say that "bettering the human condition is the greatest good any individual can achieve." And I'm sure he would agree with me that the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports has helped do just that.

Congratulations on fifty successful years, and here's to fifty more!

Sincerely,



William H. Frist, M.D. (R-TN)  
U.S. Senate Majority Leader





**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

We would like to extend our warmest congratulations to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports on the celebration of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

As Co-Chairmen of the Congressional Fitness Caucus, we promote preventive health care measures, such as fitness and nutrition, which foster healthier lifestyles and lower the cost of healthcare for all consumers. While we do not expect to turn every citizen into Lance Armstrong, we know that small first steps toward wellness by the general public will bring about significant results.

For this reason, we thank the Council for its fantastic efforts to effectively spread that message across our great country, especially among our youth.


But our work is not done.

We face a chronic obesity problem that requires new approaches in our homes and in our schools. We must encourage extracurricular activities that take our youth out from behind the television set or computer and onto a field of play.

We look forward to working with the Council in the coming years to move toward wellness. Together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of millions of people while preserving our healthcare delivery system for those in need.

With all our gratitude,

  
Zach Wamp  
Member of Congress

  
Mark Udall  
Member of Congress







GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

*President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports*

I am pleased to offer my congratulations on the occasion of your fiftieth anniversary.

The history of the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports is marked by many achievements. Since its inception in 1956, the Council has worked to enrich our nation's athletic traditions and encourage healthy living habits among all Americans.

Council members work actively to build partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors to promote health and emphasize the importance of physical activity and nutrition. Through fitness, citizens learn to take charge of their own health and longevity, while gaining lessons in initiative, perseverance and discipline.

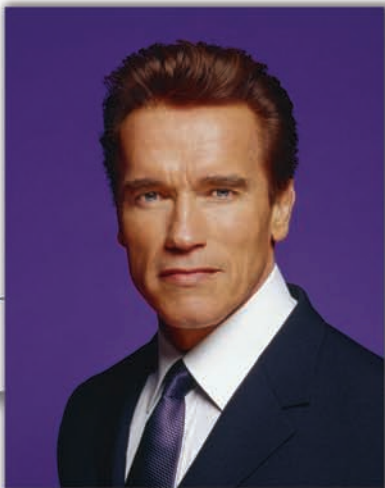
For our children, sportsmanship also translates into success both on and off the field, instilling in our young ones an appreciation for hard work and focus in building meaningful lives and careers.

I join Californians in celebrating the advances in physical fitness over the last half century, and I congratulate the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports for promoting wellness in our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arnold Schwarzenegger".

Arnold Schwarzenegger



• SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814 • (916) 445-2841







March 2006

Dear Friends:

It is with great pleasure that I offer my congratulations to the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports on 50 years of service to the citizens of the United States.

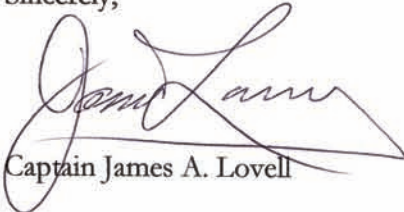
The issues we faced in the '60s and '70s, when I was a member of the Council, are similar to the issue the Council is promoting today. I believe that one of the single most vital issues facing Americans today is the lack of physical activity on a daily basis. The PCPFS works tirelessly to assist all Americans in fulfilling a healthier lifestyle.

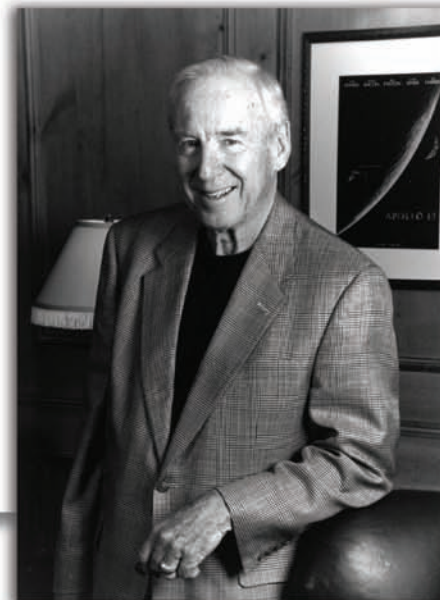
I am proud that I was a part of the Council, and am reminded daily of the information instilled in me during that time.

PCPFS lives by the motto that Gene Kranz stated during my perilous Apollo 13 flight: Failure is not an option!

Congratulations to the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports on 50 years of service to the American people. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

  
Captain James A. Lovell







THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL  
ON PHYSICAL FITNESS  
AND SPORTS

May 1, 2006

With the celebration of the first fifty years of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the tenth anniversary of the Surgeon General's landmark report (*Physical Activity and Health*, 1996), the example of active living set by President George W. Bush, and continuing increases in overweight and obesity among Americans of all ages, the year 2006 marks a critical time to highlight the importance of physical activity, fitness and sports for improving and maintaining health and overall well-being.

From its founding in 1956 as the President's Council on Youth Fitness, the Council has relied upon the support and efforts of colleagues and partners in the public and private sectors to spread the Council's health and fitness messages and to implement our programs throughout the nation. Therefore, throughout the Council's fiftieth anniversary year, we are recognizing the valuable contributions and efforts of our partners, friends and colleagues who have dedicated themselves during the past five decades to improving the health and fitness of Americans.

As executive director of the Council, I want to thank the many individuals, organizations, corporations, educators, coaches, health professionals, scientists, and government agencies who have worked with us in the past and who have recently joined us as a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Partner to Get America Moving. Let's move forward in collaboration and make the next fifty years the best fifty years!

Sincerely,

Melissa Johnson, M.S.  
Executive Director

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# EDITORS' FOREWORD

Having worked on this publication for many months, we see three prevailing memories that seem to surface whenever we talk to friends or strangers about the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports: educational material, sit-ups, and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Depending on a person's age – more specifically, when they attended school in this country – almost everyone has either taken the PCPFS' physical fitness test, been educated about healthy living through its printed materials, or heard lifestyle messages from its spokespeople. With overweight and obesity rising in children and adults at near-emergency rates over the past two decades (since 1980), the message of the PCPFS is more relevant than ever. But to envision what the PCPFS must do, we must first look back at what it has been charged to do from the beginning.

Alarmed by studies he had conducted, Dr. Hans Kraus brought some disturbing facts about physical fitness to President Eisenhower's attention in the 1950s. Americans at that time were just settling into their postwar lifestyle. The baby boom was well under way, families were moving to the suburbs, and there had never been a more prosperous time in American history, which translated into more cars on the road, an abundance of food, and less need for manual labor on the part of average citizens. Compared to their European counterparts, who had it much tougher during the postwar period, American youths were getting soft. To combat this trend, President Eisenhower called a conference on youth fitness to discuss solutions to this problem. Soon, this group developed a list of long-term goals to improve fitness within the general population of American youths. Some of these goals included popularizing athleticism, educating youths about the importance of fitness, and partnering with private organizations to encourage activity. A month later, President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10673, establishing the President's Council on Youth Fitness in July 1956.

Like the slight name changes adopted over the years, the Council has modified its mandate to stay with the times while still retaining the core principles that have made it a catalytic agent to stimulate action at the grassroots level. For one example, the Council's mission has expanded well beyond keeping youngsters fit and active. Lethargy was considered a security threat in the 1950s, so youth fitness was an important national issue. Today, it's widely recognized that the burden of inactivity is also medical. Studies have shown that middle-aged and senior citizens who get little exercise are more likely to suffer from nagging medical problems. And children who do not live an active lifestyle are less likely to adopt one in adulthood, potentially giving themselves a negative head start on poor health to come. So now the PCPFS works to get people of all ages and physical abilities off the couch and away from their computers or televisions. To achieve this, there is more effort spent on encouraging general activity and less on promoting performance and organized sports. This shift probably comes from an understanding that ordinary people can more easily make time to go for a brisk walk than to put together a game of pickup basketball or run a marathon.

While the PCPFS cannot actually make anyone get active, it has gone to great lengths to provide information and incentives to get people interested in living a healthy lifestyle. Launched in 2003, the President's Challenge Web site, [presidentschallenge.org](http://presidentschallenge.org), offers its visitors ideas for increasing activity in their daily lives as well as tools to track the real steps they've taken toward good health.

The Council has also successfully leveraged the clout and visibility of its members to help spread the word about good health. In the 1970s, astronaut/American icon Jim Lovell chaired the Council, and movie star and bodybuilding champ Arnold Schwarzenegger was a memorable force for the PCPFS in the early 1990s. When professional football star Lynn Swann retired from his chairmanship, President Bush asked John Burke to lead the Council. Burke may not be a famous athlete, but his company, Trek Bicycles, has been successful in the business of keeping people active; and that's exactly the kind of guidance PCPFS needs to continue its vital mission to activate America.



PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS  
THE FIRST 50 YEARS: 1956-2006

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presidential Proclamation .....5

**LETTERS**

**William H. Frist**

U.S. Senator .....7

**Mark Udall and Zach Wamp**

U.S. Representatives .....9

**Arnold Schwarzenegger**

Governor, State of California .....11

**Capt. James A. Lovell**

Chair - President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, 1967-1978 .....13

**Melissa Johnson**

Executive Director - President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports .....15

**Editors' Foreword** .....17

**FEATURES**

**Get Fit in May**

By Barbara Stahura .....24

**Physical Activity: "The Magic Pill"**

By Jane Wargo and Russell Pate .....34

**The First Fifty Years, 1956-2006**

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Revisits Its Roots and Charts Its Future

By Julie Sturgeon and Janice Meer .....40

**PCPFS Council Members and Executives**

(July 1956 - May 2006) .....64





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>President George W. Bush Leads by Example</b> America's Fittest President Calls on Americans to Be Physically Active Every Day By Michael A. Robinson .....	.68
<b>Governor Mike Huckabee</b> Lightening Up and Leading by Example By Tim Kennedy .....	.74
<b>Physical Activity, Fitness, and Sports Initiatives of the PCPFS</b> By Craig Collins .....	.80
<b>Visionary Americans Promote a Healthier, Active Nation</b> By John Harney .....	.92
<b>Reactivating American Youth</b> By Steven Ackerman .....	.104
<b>Redefining Sports for Americans of All Ages, Backgrounds, and Abilities</b> Today Everyone Can Experience the Joy of Movement By Craig Collins .....	.114
<b>Making Healthy Choices</b> Nutrition, Physical Activity, Screenings, and Risk Avoidance Are Keys to Good Health By Tara N. Wilfong .....	.124
<b>The Obesity Epidemic</b> Physical Activity as Preventive Medicine By Craig Collins .....	.132
<b>Public-Private Partnerships: A Win-Win Proposition</b> PCPFS Salutes Its Partners for Support in Promoting an Active America By Laura Spinale .....	.138
<b>Science Board of the PCPFS</b> Experts Arm Council Members with Best Data/Practices By Barbara Stahura .....	.146







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The **NEW** President's Challenge Physical Activity & Fitness Awards Program

You're it.  
**Get fit!**



[www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)

# PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS & SPORTS

The First 50 Years: 1956-2006

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# GET FIT IN MAY

By Barbara Stahura

**I**n 1981, when the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) chose the first week in May as National Physical Fitness and Sports Week, the idea was to choose a time when people were already enjoying the outdoors, to show them how easy and fun it is to be physically active, and explain how physical activity would improve their health. The intent of having a national week promoting physical activity was to stimulate Americans to continue their activities and to become physically active all year long. Since May arrives at the end of the school year, it's a good opportunity to impart health messages to kids before they take a summer break.

National Physical Fitness and Sports Week was the brainchild of Matt Guidry, now a retired federal employee, who worked at PCPFS for many years. When he proposed the idea to the Council's leadership, they agreed that a national week devoted to physical activity and fitness would be an excellent way to broadcast messages about health and fitness to the entire country.

"There were other national events like the Great American Smoke-Out, cancer prevention activities, and the

like, but there was no organization promoting physical fitness nationally," Guidry says. "So we went forward. But instead of having our health and fitness initiative compartmentalized into youth, adults, men, women, and so on, we put everything together into a single concept."

Although May 1-7 was chosen as the designated week the first year, many organizations couldn't participate in such a short time frame. So in 1983, the week was expanded to the entire month of May. President Ronald Reagan, a physically-fit man well-known for wood chopping and horseback riding on his California ranch, was happy to sign the proclamation designating May as "National Physical Fitness and Sports Month." The Council soon began also using the shorter term "May Month."

Guidry says designating a month that highlights physical activity and a healthy lifestyle offered benefits for adults and children alike, and the PCPFS partnered with many national and local organizations to get the word out and present programs. For organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, the National Recreation and Park Association, local community centers, fitness clubs, employee fitness associations, businesses, and many others, May Month was "an added



avenue to focus on the importance of physical activity for the populations they served," says Guidry. "These organizations could select any day or week within May to put on special events to attract their membership and the community, and to have links to other organizations about the importance of physical activity as a preventive health modality."

May Month is "just a start" toward physical fitness, says Christine Spain, director of research, planning, and special projects for the PCPFS. "It brings in people who say, 'I don't like to exercise,' to show them that all activity counts, to move your body, to make movement part of your everyday life. This one month is a tool to highlight how to get Americans up and moving towards a healthier quality of life."

From the beginning, the Council has had enthusiastic support from the private sector, including many corporations. For instance, Atlas Van Lines funded the design and printing of 500,000 May Month posters for several years, then had its drivers deliver them around the country in their moving vans.

May Month has always been kicked off each year in Washington, D.C. Over the years, the activities have changed. In the beginning, says Guidry, Project Perfect Fit

was the kick-off event, via a program broadcast on NBC, to "highlight the concept of the perfectly fit individual." For a decade, the event was held on the west steps of the U.S. Capitol, with "representatives of all ages demonstrating the kinds of activities they could do," he says. "One year, in one group the youngest person was probably 87. They did calisthenics. It was amazing." When Arnold Schwarzenegger was appointed chair of the PCPFS by President George H.W. Bush, the kick-off moved to the White House, with the "Great American Workout" held on the South Lawn. Over the years, many kick-off events were often broadcast on the *Today Show* and reported elsewhere. Posters and other promotional materials were sent around the country to various organizations that wanted to participate.

### Festival Kicks Off May Month

In the 21st century, the United States may well have the fittest president in U.S. history. President George W. Bush, formerly an avid runner, is now a dedicated bicyclist who also lifts weights and does other fitness activities every day. Like President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who founded the

**Opposite:** Well-known television fitness instructor Denise Austin leads students in an aerobic workout during PCPFS' 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival. **Below:** President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush kick off the Great American Workout with Arnold Schwarzenegger and then-Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan in May 1990.







Council in 1956 as the President's Council on Youth Fitness, President Bush is concerned about the general lack of physical activity in the United States, particularly among American children. Although there was progress up until about 1980, physical activity participation among American children, as well as their parents, has declined. Today, more than 60 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity, and 25 percent are not active at all. Obesity is epidemic among all age groups, and diabetes rates are rising along with the number of overweight individuals of all ages. In response to these alarming trends, President Bush reinvigorated the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports with an executive order in 2002.

*Right: Matt Guidry (right) and Clinton-era Council member Kevin Saunders. Guidry, now a retired PCPFS employee, is credited with proposing the creation of National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Below: Emphasizing the need for people of all ages to be active, a group of line dancers performs a demonstration at the 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival.*





## THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS ARE AMONG THOSE THAT HAVE ESTABLISHED MAY MONTH ACTIVITIES OBSERVED NATIONWIDE:

### National Association for Health & Fitness (NAHF)

Founded in the late 1970s as the Association of Governors Councils on Physical Fitness and Sports, the nonprofit NAHF promotes physical fitness, sports, and healthy lifestyles as ways to improve quality of life. NAHF fosters and supports governors and state councils and coalitions that promote and encourage regular physical activity. The NAHF May Month activity is National Employee Health and Fitness Day, which promotes to employers and employees alike the value of a physically active workforce. Held on the third Wednesday of May, it "encourages employers to host wellness-promoting activities at worksites, and encourages communities to highlight existing worksite wellness initiatives or encourage the development of new plans, policies, or actions that will support employee health," says Phil Haberstro, NAHF executive director. NAHF emphasizes that all employers can take advantage of the resources of the PCPFS in encouraging their employees to adopt an active lifestyle. Such encouragement is especially important now because of the changes in the American workplace over the last 30 years, particularly with the introduction of technology that has reduced physical activity and may also compete for people's time, Haberstro explains. (See [www.physicalfitness.org/about.html](http://www.physicalfitness.org/about.html)).



National Employee Health & Fitness Day in Buffalo, NY.

### PE4life

PE4life is working to reverse the trend of decreased physical activity opportunities for young people. Even though 80 percent of parents favor requiring students to take physical education every day at every grade level, according to a recent Rand Institute study, many schools today are reducing or eliminating physical education due to budget or time constraints.

"We focus on the health and wellness of schoolchildren specifically, to open access to quality physical education programs that meet the needs of all schoolchildren and that deliver the education, experiences, and inspiration to lead a physically active lifestyle," says PE4life President and CEO Anne Flannery. PE4life partners with the PCPFS because they both "serve a similar mission and support each other's effort toward the promotion of physical activity and fitness," she says. PE4life initiated National PE Day during May Month, the organization's largest event. With activities in Washington, D.C., and around the country, National PE Day "draws attention to the lifetime health and fitness benefits of quality, daily, physical education," Flannery says. In addition to better physical health, those benefits include enhanced mental health, improved academic performance, and reduced present and future medical costs. Many schools host PE4life Field Days and local physical education advocacy campaigns at this time.

(See [www.pe4life.org](http://www.pe4life.org)).



PE4life advocates for increased access to physical education for schoolchildren.

### Project ACES

Project ACES, or All Children Exercise Simultaneously, has been billed as "The World's Largest Exercise Class." Held on the first Wednesday in May as part of National Physical Fitness and Sports Month and National Physical Education Week, this is the day when millions of children around the world exercise together in activities that are non-competitive, motivational, and fun. "Project ACES makes fitness fun," says H.J. Saunders, ACES president. "It helps empower each and every child who participates. They think it's cool that kids just like them all over the world are exercising together." A project of the Youth Fitness Coalition, Project ACES has worked with the PCPFS since 1989. (See [www.projectaces.com](http://www.projectaces.com)).

Photo courtesy of National Association for Health & Fitness

Photo by Mark Chamberlain





In 2004, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports celebrated the HealthierUS Fitness Festival on the National Mall, says Melissa Johnson, executive director of the PCPFS. A free public celebration of health, physical activity, and fitness, the festival gives exhibitors and fitness professionals the opportunity to demonstrate a wide variety of equipment and activities people can use to improve their physical fitness by staying active.

At the 2005 festival marking National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, sports and fitness experts on two stages demonstrated that physical activities can be enjoyable and varied - two key elements to staying active over time. Included were yoga, jazzercise, senior line dancing, tai chi, various cardiovascular workouts, and other strength and conditioning activities. There were also ongoing sports and activities, including punt/pass/kick football, soccer, rugby,

## TAKE THE PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

The President's Challenge is a motivational physical activity and fitness awards program available to anyone who commits to being active for a minimum of six weeks.

"Anyone can sign up for the President's Challenge at any time," says Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. "For those who are not yet active, taking advantage of the nationwide spirit during National Physical Fitness and Sports Month might make it easier to get started. People can even join together and work on the challenge as a group."

For those who want to begin a regular physical activity program, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) calls for 30 minutes daily (or 60 minutes for youth aged 6 to 18) of physical activity, at least five days a week.

Participants meeting this goal for six weeks earn a PALA, an embroidered presidential patch or lapel pin. For active people who want to increase their activity and fitness levels, the Presidential Champions Awards encourage participants to earn points toward bronze, silver, and gold medals.

Go to [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), sign up, and keep track of your activities online. Those who do not use a computer can fill out an activity log to keep track of their activities and times (PALA only). Logs may be obtained by calling toll-free 1-800-258-8146. Choose from about 100 activities and start logging. You can include as many activities as you like. The PCPFS encourages you to try new activities and continue doing those you enjoy. No matter what you do, you're on your way to a healthier, more active, and enjoyable life.



cycling, snowshoeing, and new sports called Tchoukball (“a Scientific Swiss Sport with a social conscience”), Paddle Battle (played with specially designed, double-ended paddles and a hacky sack), and USFooty Kids (which teaches the basic skills and rules of Australian football to boys and girls aged 8 to 14 in a safe, non-contact version).

Among the dignitaries present were Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt and U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona.

“Americans must continue to take steps toward better health by building physical activity into their day,” Leavitt told the crowd. “Thirty minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week can improve people’s quality of life and reduce the chance of chronic illness.”

Carmona added, “Unfortunately, physical activity often competes with television and video games for time in the lives of Americans. Too many children and adults are suffering from the diseases that are caused by overweight and obesity. Our growing national tendency toward physical complacency is already affecting our individual quality of life.”

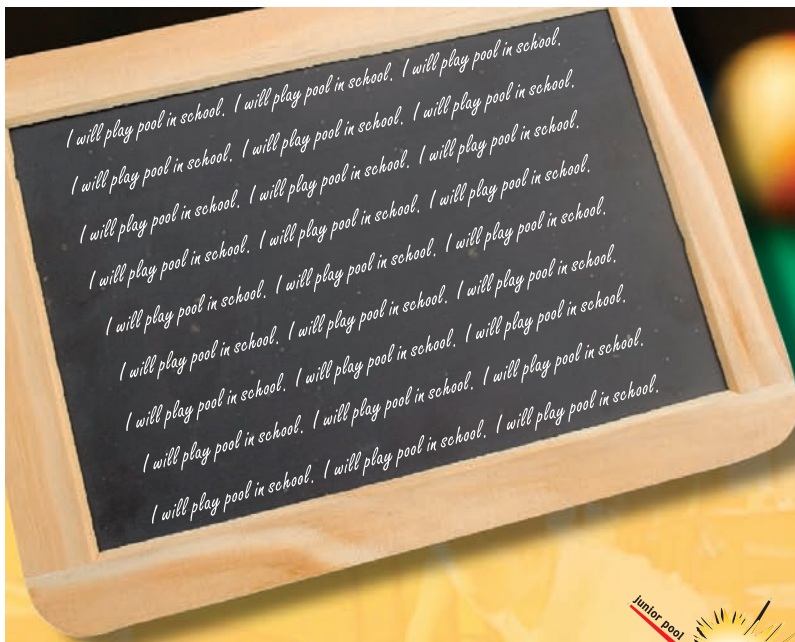
Lynn Swann, former Council chair and NFL Football Hall of Fame member, and Council members Denise Austin, Amanda Cromwell, Pam Danberg, and Danny Gable represented the PCPFS at the festival. The Harlem Globetrotters performed, and Olympic gymnast Kerri Strug made an appearance.



**The 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival allowed attendees to be entertained, educated, and involved. Opposite: Members of the Harlem Globetrotters dazzle the crowd with their basketball demonstration. Above: Health- and sports-related organizations, such as Girls On The Run, provide health and fitness information at the festival.**

The festival is also a way of promoting the president’s HealthierUS initiative, which encourages every American to achieve a better and longer life by increasing personal fitness and becoming healthier by adopting four simple behaviors: be physically active every day; eat a nutritious diet; get preventive screenings; make healthy choices/avoid

PCPFS photos



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risky behaviors. This initiative ([www.healthierus.gov](http://www.healthierus.gov)) provides information about how people of all ages can accomplish this objective without having to become an elite or competitive athlete. By taking small steps, Americans of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can lower their risk of premature death from debilitating chronic disease and improve their overall health through regular physical activity.

PCPFS' Spain encourages everyone not already active to participate in some kind of physical activity during May Month. She emphasizes that it doesn't require much time, and there's no need to become a marathoner. Just 30 minutes of daily moderate physical activity on five or more days a week lowers the risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, high blood pressure, and diabetes. The 30 minutes can be broken up into 10-minute segments throughout the day. The activities can be whatever gets a person moving: taking a brisk walk; dancing; biking; swimming; chasing the kids around the yard in a game of tag; raking leaves; taking stairs instead of elevators; or parking farther from your destination then walking the extra steps. Over time, all the physical activity adds up to better health.

"We hope that many people find they can be active through May and then decide to keep up their new active lifestyle," Spain says. "We hope they'll keep going another two weeks and earn a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award." (See sidebar.)

The PCPFS encourages local organizations such as schools, recreation departments, or clubs to plan May Month events such as fitness fairs, wellness festivals, lectures, film showings, distance or fun runs and walks, or fitness and sports testing. Community or state officials can also proclaim a day in May as Physical Fitness and Sports Day, and observe local events held under that umbrella.

The PCPFS does not mandate particular activities for May celebrations. Each organization can plan its own events, tailored to the population it serves. For instance, "an organization





in Florida might plan more activities for seniors," says Spain. "We don't tell people what to focus on. They're the experts on their own communities."

Accordingly, the PCPFS has some tips and guidelines available for organizations that want to create and hold an event for May Month. They can be found online at [www.fitness.gov/get-movingamerica.htm](http://www.fitness.gov/get-movingamerica.htm).

Individuals and organizations can make use of a yearly May Month "Tool Box" found on the PCPFS Web site, [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov). The "Tool Box" includes a "Contract to Get Active" during May Month, a press release, a calendar of health and fitness events for May, and other resources.

### May Month Partnerships

In 1994, the PCPFS reached out to public and private organizations to form the President's Physical Fitness Partners in May; this effort continues today under the heading of "Presidential Partners in May to Get America Moving." With this kind of increased visibility, the individual health and fitness messages from each organization can find a wider audience. Today, many of these same partners have become President's Challenge Advocates by finding unique ways to offer the President's Challenge program to their constituents.

**Right: Melissa Johnson works out with fitness trainer Laurent Amzallag (center) and NBC-4 weathercaster Veronica Johnson at the 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival.**



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# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

# “THE MAGIC PILL”

By Jane Wargo  
& Russell Pate





**I**f there were a single medication you could take – a pill that is free, with no side effects – that helped reduce your risk of developing or dying from many chronic diseases, would you take it? Daily physical activity is that magic pill. Getting people to take that pill is easier said than done. Everyone can gain health benefits and pleasure by being physically active – at home, at work, in school, and at leisure. It's never too early or too late to start living actively or to increase your activity level if you're already an active person. Everyone benefits from regular physical activity: young and old, men and women, boys and girls; black, white, Hispanic, Native American, Asian; disabled or not; overweight or underweight; athletic or not.

### Health Benefits of Physical Activity

Even if you don't like vigorous exercise, even if you've found that sticking to a regular workout program is hard to do, you can still improve your health substantially by building moderate activity into your daily life. It takes only small steps to make great changes to your health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommend that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most (preferably all) days of the week to improve health. Moderate physical activity helps lower cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. It helps protect against osteoporosis by improving the health of bones and relieves the symptoms of arthritis by strengthening muscles and improving flexibility and range of motion in joints. Physical activity helps reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Young people need more activity than adults to be healthy. From infancy through high school, children need to move their bodies using their large muscles to accumulate 60 minutes of activity a day.

Here's some more good news: You can start slowly and build on the duration or intensity of your activity. Any

activity helps. It all adds up to better health. More vigorous exercise that gets your target heart rate up for 20 minutes at least three times a week, plus strength training to build muscle and stretching for increased flexibility, offer added health benefits.

### How Much Physical Activity?

Guidelines vary based on age, health status, and goals.

### Children

Infants and toddlers benefit from physical activity through the development of fundamental motor skills. Being physically active on a regular basis is a great thing to instill in young children, as it may help them with educational and social pursuits and help them maintain a healthy weight as they grow. This is particularly important since overweight children risk becoming overweight adults.







The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that small children get several hours of unstructured movement every day. For a newborn, this is as simple as letting him lay on a clean, safe surface and move his arms and legs freely. Small children should never be inactive for more than 60 minutes at one time (except when sleeping). Toddlers (children 18-36 months) need at least 30 minutes of structured activity (activities with a designated movement or goal) and preschoolers (3-5 years) need at least 60 minutes of structured activities.

Children aged 6-18 need to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity most (if not all) days of the week. Adequate physical activity for children and youth means that they move their bodies, including the large muscle groups, for at least 60 minutes a day.

### Adults

People over age 18 need at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days a week to be healthy. Anyone who has been sedentary for an extended period of time and is just beginning an activity program should start out slowly and build up to the recommended level. When inactive adults become active, they gain energy, and feel better.

### Older Adults

Older people suffer greatly from sedentary lives. Regular physical activity helps them carry out activities of daily living, such as getting dressed, bathing, and cooking meals by improving strength, flexibility, and balance. Being physically active can help older people increase their social interactions. Older adults benefit greatly from stretching every day and participating in strength-building activities (e.g., lifting weights, circuit training, or using exercise bands/balls) two to three days each week. Strength-building and stretching or flexibility exercises are included as a part of the recommended 30 minutes a day on five or more days a week.

### People with Disabilities

In general, adults and children with disabilities should follow the same physical activity recommendations as people without disabilities (30 to 60 minutes a day, five or more days a week). However, recognizing that many conditions may limit how active a person can be or the type of movement he or she is able to perform, it is recommended that you consult a healthcare provider or personal trainer who is

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WEIGHT CONTROL

For people seeking to lose weight or maintain weight loss, more than the minimum amounts of recommended physical activity may be necessary. For individuals who want to lose weight gradually, adding more physical activity or longer bouts of physical activity, combined with a healthy diet, helps facilitate weight loss goals and helps you keep the weight off once you've lost it.

Each pound of fat your body stores represents approximately 3,500 calories of unused energy. In order to lose one pound, you would have to create a deficit of 3,500 calories by either eating 3,500 fewer calories or by using 3,500 calories through physical activity.

Here's a quick example of the calories in/calories out concept using walking. Fifteen minutes of walking at a moderate pace (about 1 mile) uses about 100 calories (give or take a little depending on current weight and stride length). If you walked for 15 minutes every day for a week, you would use an extra 700 calories. Assuming that you keep your calorie intake at a steady level, it would take you about five weeks to lose one pound of fat. Over the course of a year, that adds up to 10 pounds. While that may seem like a long time to lose 10 pounds, think about the little effort it took to get there - you maintained your existing diet and added just 15 minutes of moderate walking every day.



## MODERATE OR VIGOROUS?

Activities are defined as moderate or vigorous based on the level of effort exerted while engaging in the activity. A general rule of thumb is that you should be able to talk while participating in moderate activity whereas talking may be difficult during vigorous activity.

### Sedentary

Watching TV  
Reading  
Eating  
Typing on computer  
Talking on the phone  
Standing in line  
Riding in a car  
General office work

### Light

Slow walking  
Cooking food  
Washing dishes  
Putting away groceries  
Child care  
Croquet  
Mild stretching  
Billiards

### Moderate

Brisk walking  
Weight lifting  
Tai chi  
Dancing  
Golf  
Cleaning house  
Gardening  
Softball

### Vigorous

Walking up stairs  
Jogging/running  
Bicycling (faster than 12 mph)  
Swimming  
Cross-country skiing  
Singles tennis  
Jumping rope  
Basketball



## Increasing Strength

### **Target: Your Muscles**

Movements or activities that increase strength are important for a variety of reasons. Strength-building exercises:

- improve your muscle-to-fat ratio, helping you burn calories more efficiently and lose weight;
- help you carry out activities of daily living more efficiently, such as carrying groceries, working in the yard, and picking up children or grandchildren;
- protect major muscles in the arms, back, and legs;
- give you a toned appearance and improve your posture, which can be good for your self-confidence.

Engaging in a weight- or resistance-training program is a little more technical than going for a walk or bike ride, which is why it is recommended that you consult with a certified trainer before beginning a routine. At the very least, do a little research on movements, number of repetitions, appropriate weight, and proper positioning, and take it slow. Of course, there are less-complicated movements you can do at home to help improve strength such as push-ups, squats, lunges or step-ups, and abdominal curls or leg raises. Even with these “at home” moves there are some positioning

qualified to develop an appropriate and attainable program of regular physical activity and/or sports. For information, consult the Web site of the National Center for Physical Activity and Disability ([www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)).

## COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FITNESS

### Improving Cardiovascular Endurance

#### **Target: Your Heart**

Any activity that moves your whole body or uses large muscle groups can improve cardiovascular endurance. Cardiovascular (cardio) activities exercise the heart by increasing your breathing and heart rate. They improve the ability of the circulatory and respiratory systems to supply oxygen during sustained physical activity. Examples of activities that build cardiovascular endurance include walking, running, riding a bicycle, swimming, aerobics classes, and using cardio equipment (treadmill, elliptical trainer).

## A BETTER FRAME OF MIND

Being physically active reduces the symptoms of anxiety and depression and makes you better equipped to handle stressors you encounter in everyday life. Being active and healthy while helping your community is a great way to feel good about yourself and to make friends. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that individuals who volunteer have a higher likelihood of getting the recommended amounts of physical activity. So help yourself by helping your community.





## KEEPING IT SAFE

In order to help ensure your safety and the safety of others, keep the following in mind:

- Wear the appropriate protective gear, such as a helmet when biking, in-line skating, and skateboarding, as well as elbow, knee, and wrist guards, especially when in-line skating and skateboarding.
- Wear sunscreen regardless of whether it's 30 degrees or 80 degrees.
- Wear the right clothing. Dressing in layers is always best. Protective clothing such as a hat can also guard against sun exposure.
- When active for extended periods of time (45 minutes or more) or in very hot conditions, be sure to hydrate. Particularly during vigorous activity or activity performed in very hot weather, waiting until you are thirsty means you waited too long and you are probably a little dehydrated. Be sure to drink water when you are thirsty. The ideal is to balance fluid lost through sweating with fluid intake.
- Be properly equipped for any extended activity, such as a long hike, bike ride, or walk.
- Obey traffic laws and signals. Pedestrians may have the right of way, but drivers don't always follow that rule. Never count on a car stopping for you and never assume that a driver sees you. When walking or running, do so facing traffic so you can see cars as they approach you.
- When trying new pursuits such as downhill skiing or golf, be sure to read the rules and safety considerations associated with the sport. They will help keep you and others injury-free and enjoying the activity for a long time to come.
- When an injury has occurred, seek medical help if you experience any of the following:
  - Pain that is extreme or persistent
  - Severe trauma to any joint
  - Failure of the injury to heal in a reasonable amount of time
  - Development of an infection or fever
  - If you're unsure about the severity of the injury.

guidelines you need to be aware of to ensure you don't injure yourself and to make sure you get the most benefit out of each movement.

- Work all the major muscle groups:
  - Upper Body: shoulders, back, chest, abdominals
  - Arms: biceps, triceps, forearms
  - Legs: quadriceps, hamstrings, calves
- Work larger muscle groups (e.g., back, quadriceps) before smaller muscle groups (e.g., biceps, calves).
- Alternate between upper-body (shoulders), lower-body (quadriceps), and trunk (abdominal) exercises.

## BE A GOOD SPORT

Nothing ruins the fun of physical activity and sports participation faster than a poor sport. Practice the principles of good sportsmanship. Be courteous and show respect at all times, win or lose. That goes for players, parents of young players, and coaches.

- Take at least one day of rest between weight training sessions to allow muscles to recover. At the very least, don't exercise the same muscle groups two days in a row.
- Try to do weight or resistance exercises at least twice a week.
- If you can't do at least 10 repetitions, then you are probably lifting too much weight. Lighten your load and gradually increase the weight.

### Improving Flexibility

#### Target: Your Joints and Muscles

Being flexible means that you can move joints and use muscles through their full range of motion. This is important as you bend, reach, and twist in the movements you perform while engaging in your favorite activity, work, or tasks at home. Specifically, low back and upper leg flexibility is key to preventing low back pain.

Stretching is an activity you can do on a regular basis and provides many benefits. As with any activity, improperly performing a stretch can cause injury, so be sure to remember the following:

- Ease into a stretch and hold each stretch in a static position for 10-20 seconds.
- Never bounce.
- Stretch to the point of resistance, but not until it hurts. If it hurts, you've gone too far.
- Don't rush through a stretching routine. Five to ten minutes is all it takes before and after a workout. Use that time to prepare mentally for the activity ahead or to reflect on what you just accomplished!

### Getting Started

Generally, if you're under age 45 and in good health, you probably don't need to consult with your physician before you begin any type of exercise or physical activity program. If you are over 45 or have a serious health condition, it's best to consult your healthcare provider before beginning any regular physical activity program. Some inactive people begin an activity program by trying to do too much too soon. A good rule of thumb is to begin by adding about 10 percent to your current activity level. For instance, if you can walk for 10 minutes at a moderate pace before you become tired or it becomes uncomfortable, walk for 10 minutes two times a day. After a week, try 11 minutes



per session. In four weeks, you'll be up to 15 minutes. Soon you'll be able to walk for 30 minutes per session. Or, you might try adding in a five-minute resistance or strengthening session and gradually increasing the amount you lift or adding in new movements to ensure all major muscle groups get equal conditioning.

### What Kinds of Activities?

There are hundreds of activities you can do to meet your physical activity

goals, including increasing your cardiovascular endurance, strength, and flexibility. The President's Challenge Web site, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), lists over 100 activities you can do to earn points toward either the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) or the Presidential Champions Bronze, Silver, or Gold medal. Activities range from sports, running, swimming, and walking to shuffleboard, housework, gardening, tai chi, dancing, and yoga.



## FINDING TIME

Lack of time is the No. 1 excuse for not being active in our fast-paced, over-scheduled society. Here are some suggestions for helping you find the time you've been missing all these years. You may want to start off doing these lifestyle activities and gradually add in more dedicated activity time (e.g., building up to a 30-minute walk, a basketball game with friends twice a week, a 30-minute weight-training session at the gym three days per week).

### At home:

- In an apartment building, take the stairs.
- Instead of a lawn service, cut the grass yourself using a push mower. A reel mower is even better, and it's better on the environment because it's powered solely by you.
- Instead of sitting in the car waiting for your child's practice to be over or watching a game from the stands, pass the time or take in the action by walking around the playing field a few times.
- View yard work and household cleaning not as chores but as opportunities for some active time. That may motivate you to work a little harder and faster and leave you more free time to do what you please.
- Need to run an errand to a friend's house down the street or to a local store? Walk or ride your bike.
- Start a new walking routine with your best four-legged friend. Instead of letting him out the back door every morning or evening, put on his leash and take him for a walk.
- Have you tried yoga or Pilates? If you can't find a class you can take, there are numerous videos and books you can buy. The exercises from both disciplines are wonderful for people of all ages and abilities. Find one you enjoy and commit to going through a series of movements or a video with your child or spouse. It's a great activity to

learn together, and doing it with a buddy can be the motivation you need to stick with it.

- Take advantage of a weekend morning or afternoon. Take an early walk or bike ride in the morning. Plan to meet up with a friend and walk to get a cup of coffee. Turn off the TV for an afternoon picnic at a park where you and your family or friends can participate in a variety of activities: hiking, flying a kite, playing Frisbee or softball, or swimming.

### At work:

- If able, take the stairs. It may be quicker than standing in line waiting for the elevator and then waiting for everyone's stops. Like every suggestion, start by doing it two or three times each week. Or, if you work on the 35th floor, take the stairs up to the fifth floor and hop on the elevator there, gradually adding to the number of flights you take.
- Stretch at your desk a couple of times a day.
- More than likely, you are entitled to a 10-minute break. Take it and go for a walk around your floor or hike a few flights of stairs. You'll be amazed at the energy boost you get from that short jaunt.
- At lunch, commit to walking at least once a week during your break.
- Start for the office a few minutes early and get off the bus or subway a stop early. Do the same when going home at night. If you don't take public transportation, park your car farther away from the door to your office building. Better yet, help ease traffic congestion in your area and bike to work. Many major cities have resources for bicycle commuters to help you arrive at work safely. Don't dismiss the option if you can't bike every day. Remember, every little bit counts!

Some of the material in this article was taken from: "Health Fitness Instructor's Handbook" (4th ed.), by E.T. Howley and B. Don Franks; "Stay Active and Be Fit," a publication of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS). Jane Wargo is a PCPFS program analyst; Russell Pate, Ph.D., is a member of the PCPFS Science Board.





# THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS 1956-2006

## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Revisits Its Roots and Charts Its Future

By Julie Sturgeon and Janice Meer

**I**n 1953, Joseph Stalin died of a stroke; Elizabeth II was crowned Queen of England; and Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay conquered Mount Everest. On the homefront, Sen. Joseph McCarthy's investigations were well under way; Jonas Salk administered his first five polio vaccines; and the United States was preparing to launch the first nuclear-powered submarine and test the first hydrogen bomb. On a lighter note, two cars in the garage, automatic appliances in the American kitchen, and a television set in the living room testified to the nation's postwar ease and affluence. In that year, the first issue of *TV Guide* hit the newsstands.

Most Americans were unaware of an article that appeared that year (December 1953), "Muscular Fitness

and Health," published in the *Journal of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation*. In the article, coauthors Hans Kraus and Bonnie Prudden sounded an alarm: The affluent lifestyle of 20th century America was making life so easy that American adults and children were rapidly losing muscle tone. To compensate, the authors warned, Americans would have to engage in regular exercise to attain a state of physical fitness comparable to that of an earlier era, when Americans walked for transportation, worked on farms, and accomplished most activities of daily living and work through manual labor.

Kraus and his associates had previously published several other papers emphasizing the woeful state of the nation's physical fitness, including another article coauthored with



Hans Kraus, M.D.

Prudden (under the name Ruth P. Hirschland), which appeared in the *New York State Journal of Medicine*. Working with Dr. Sonja Weber at the

Photo courtesy of Susan Schwartz



Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace

**Left: President Dwight D. Eisenhower circa 1956, the same year he established the President's Council on Youth Fitness. Right: Under President Eisenhower, Vice President Richard Nixon also served as the President's Council on Youth Fitness' first chairman.**

Posture Clinic of Manhattan's Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital, Kraus had designed the Kraus-Weber Tests for Muscular Fitness. The article in the *New York State Journal of Medicine* reported the results of a study that administered the Kraus-Weber Tests to about 4,400 students between ages 6 and 16 in public school systems across the United States and to about 3,000 European students in the same age range in Switzerland, Italy, and Austria. The test results were startling: 56 percent of the U.S. students failed at least one of the test components, which included activities such as leg lifts, sit-ups, trunk lifts, and toe touches. However, only about 8 percent of the European children failed even one of the test components.

No matter what age, gender, or test, Europeans kids held a decisive edge. Kraus attributed the test results to lifestyle.

their own beds and setting the table, nothing more strenuous than walking the dog or mowing the lawn.

Kraus's article in the *New York State Journal of Medicine* caught the attention of John Kelly, a successful Philadelphia contractor better known as the father of actress Grace Kelly than as an athlete (national sculling champion) and wartime physical fitness officer. Horrified at the implications of Kraus' findings, Kelly passed the report along to Sen. James Duff of Pennsylvania. Duff was so shaken by Kraus' findings that he took the issue up with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who reportedly stated that he too was "shocked" by the trends exposed by Kraus and called the test results "alarming."

In 1954, Kraus, an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at New York University, was invited to

***"I believe you and I share the feeling that more and better coordinated attention should be given to this most precious asset – our youth – within the Federal government. By this I do not mean that we should have an over-riding Federal program. The fitness of our young people is essentially a home and local community problem; ... your deliberations also reveal a need for arousing in the American people a new awareness of the importance of physical and recreational activity ... "***

**President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Participants, President's Conference on the Fitness of American Youth**

Europeans relied less on automobiles, school buses, and elevators. European children walked miles to school, rode bicycles, hiked, and chopped and hauled wood for home heating. In contrast, American children were largely driven in cars by their parents, confined to their own neighborhoods, and obligated to perform only easy chores such as making

present his report to the national convention of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City. This opportunity gave him a forum to sound an alarm in the mainstream media. Magazines such as *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated* seized on the test findings and provided interview opportunities for Kraus to put his

Dwight D Eisenhower Library





messages front and center before the American people: Getting and maintaining physical fitness through exercise is key to physical and emotional well-being; U.S. children coming into the first grade were already muscle deficient; U.S. public schools weren't offering enough physical activity to reverse the trend.

The media "buzz" generated by Kraus, coupled with his determination to take his case to the highest levels of the federal government, finally began to get results. Despite lack of agreement among health and fitness professionals about the adequacy of the Kraus-Weber Tests and about the reliability of the results showing American children to be less fit than Europeans, many leaders in the physical education community viewed Kraus' work as a welcome opportunity to promote more school PE programs.

Kraus and Prudden were invited to a White House luncheon held on July 11, 1955, to present the findings of their report to 30 government leaders, medical researchers, and sports personalities. Following the luncheon, President Eisenhower directed Vice President Richard Nixon to call a meeting to decide what actions the government should take in view of Kraus' results. The resulting meeting took place less than a month later, on Aug. 8, 1955, and included Kraus and Prudden, sports leaders, government workers, and educators. That group, in turn, recommended that the focus of

- Out of school programs should include agencies already working in the field (e.g. Boy and Girl Scouts, YMCA, etc.);
- Funds for any programs and initiatives should come from private industry, foundations, community chests; a greater share of tax revenues should be allocated to community recreation;
- Schools should have more time, equipment, and personnel for physical education and should focus increased attention on children who are not athletically gifted, rather than on "stars;"
- The standards and prestige of the physical education profession must be raised;
- Community recreational facilities should be increased and better use made of existing facilities;
- All children must have periodic medical examinations;
- Better leadership is needed for physical activity at home, in the school, and in the community, and adults should be role models for physical fitness.
- Girls should have equal opportunities for physical fitness.

On July 16, 1956, President Eisenhower established the President's Council on Youth Fitness (Executive Order 10673); in the same Executive Order, the president called for creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee on the Fitness of American Youth. Eisenhower envisioned the President's

***"The task of the Federal government is to assist the educators and the many fine organizations, now dealing with the problem, that they may improve and advance projects that are already underway ... I will ask members of my Cabinet who head departments having activities in this area to serve on this Council. Thereby, we can be assured that top level attention will be directed constantly to this most important field, and the activities of some 35 Federal agencies will be better coordinated."***

### President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Executive Order

the government response should be youth fitness and called for a conference of leaders and experts to develop specific recommendations.

Although the conference was scheduled to be held immediately, it was delayed almost a year because of the president's illness. Finally, on June 18-19, 1956, the President's Conference on the Fitness of American Youth was held at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. At the president's direction, Nixon presided as conference chairman. Attending were 140 participants, including Kraus and Prudden; national, state, and local government leaders; educators; people representing the fields of health, medicine, and sport; youth and civic organizations; and media.

The broad range of recommendations generated during the conference included the following:

- The public must be made aware of the problem of establishing and maintaining fitness;
- Fitness must be popularized and promoted among youth;
- Research on fitness is needed to decide what kind and how much;

Council on Youth Fitness as a catalytic agency that would educate, stimulate, motivate, and encourage local communities and individual Americans to promote and adopt active lifestyles.

President Eisenhower strongly believed that communities and organizations at the grassroots level were the appropriate agents to design programs and implement corrective actions to address the concerns identified at the federal level. The role of the Council would be to sound the alarm and identify concerns, to be a "catalytic agent" to stimulate and encourage action at the grassroots level.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS (1956-2006)

#### President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1961

As a former military officer, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was sensitive to the need for fitness among the pool of America's potential fighting forces and was familiar



## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness

with the complaints of recruiters and officers in the armed forces about the poor fitness levels of American draftees during World War II and the Korean War. At that time, a reported 50 percent of men who showed up at draft boards throughout the nation were considered physically unfit. President Eisenhower was also concerned about the growing problem of juvenile delinquency and considered physical exercise an important measure to keep youth on the playground and off the streets. Sensitive to the appropriate roles of "home and local community," President Eisenhower envisioned parents, schools, and local organizations as the ones to oversee the activities of American children.

The first President's Council on Youth Fitness was chaired by Vice President Nixon; Council members were Cabinet secretaries of the Departments of Interior; Agriculture; Labor; Health, Education and Welfare; and the Attorney General. Funding for Council activities came from the agencies. The Citizens Advisory Committee on the Fitness of American Youth was envisioned as a group of key citizens from a variety of disciplines, whose assignment was to study the problem and to alert the American people about what should be done to achieve the goal of a fit American youth.

As the Cabinet-level members of the Council and Citizens Advisory Committee continued to define and refine their roles

and responsibilities during the early years, Interior Secretary Fred A. Seaton, chairman of the Council in 1958, reiterated President Eisenhower's vision of the structure and limitations of the Council, which would be a "stimulator, a catalyst."

By calling attention to the poor state of youth fitness, President Eisenhower set a serious tone for the Council and outlined limited parameters for the organization rather than dictating specific actions and programs from the top down. His view was that it was the role of the federal government to sound the alarm and identify concerns, to be a "catalytic agent" to stimulate and encourage the action at the grassroots level. The function of the Council would be to persuade and educate the American people to do something about fitness, not to dictate policy. To that end, the president sent his Council administrator, Shane McCarthy, around the nation to speak to Americans about the importance of physical fitness.

### President John F. Kennedy, 1961-1963

Shortly before he took office, President-elect John F. Kennedy identified physical fitness as a defining principle of his administration. The first media-savvy president to campaign extensively on television, the president-elect mobilized the power of the mainstream media by publishing an article,

***The Council "has been, and it must continue to be, a stimulator, a catalyst. Neither the President nor ourselves intended that the Council develop into a centralized, bureaucratic agency, with regional, state, and local offices doling out federal funds to 'hand down' a uniform code for fitness and to prescribe to every community in the Nation what should be done to improve the state of fitness of its young people."***

Fred A. Seaton, chairman, President's Council on Youth Fitness, 1958



President John F. Kennedy and Charles "Bud" Wilkinson, 1961.





"The Soft American," in *Sports Illustrated* (Dec. 26, 1960) less than a month before his inauguration. It was a first – a president-elect writing an article in the popular media to announce public policy before taking office.

In his *Sports Illustrated* piece, President Kennedy outlined four points as the basis of his physical fitness program: a White House Committee on Health and Fitness; direct oversight of the initiative by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; an annual Youth Fitness Conference to be attended by state governors; and an unambiguous assertion that physical fitness was the business of the federal government. He concluded the article by laying the foundation for reorganizing the Council. Within a month of his inauguration, President Kennedy spoke at the Conference on Physical Fitness of Youth. Under President Kennedy, the President's Council would not only spread the word to Americans about the importance of physical fitness for youth but would also conduct youth fitness surveys, publish fitness information, and offer technical advice to schools and communities about how to improve physical fitness not only for youth but for Americans of all ages.

Although the Council did not have the authority to impose a national physical fitness program, state and local leaders indicated to the Council that they would welcome guidance. President Kennedy selected Charles ("Bud") Wilkinson, athletic director and football coach at the University of Oklahoma, as the first Physical Fitness Consultant to the President. Wilkinson assembled a professional staff that included Richard Snider (administrator), C. Carson Conrad, and Glenn Swengros.

The Council developed a physical fitness curriculum in consultation with major educational and medical organizations, and published and distributed hundreds of thousands of free publications, including "Youth Physical Fitness"

***"We want a nation of participants in the vigorous life. This is not a matter which can be settled, of course, from Washington. It is really a matter which starts with each individual family. It is my hope ... that the communities will be concerned, to make it possible for young boys and girls to participate actively in the physical life; and that men and women who have reached the age of maturity will concern themselves with maintaining their own participation in this phase of national vigor – national life."***

**President John F. Kennedy,  
Conference on Physical Fitness of Youth, 1961**

(the "Blue Book") in 1961. In 1962, Kennedy published a second article in *Sports Illustrated* ("The Vigor We Need"). The booklet "Adult Physical Fitness" was published in 1963. That year, a committee was formed by the Council to determine the organization's role in research. Two documents resulted: "Physical Fitness Research Needs" and "Proposed Physical Fitness Research Projects."

When President Kennedy unearthed an old executive order dating back to Theodore Roosevelt, which challenged Marine officers to walk 50 miles in 20 hours, he challenged the White House staff to take a 50-mile hike. As a lark, Attorney General Robert Kennedy accepted the challenge and walked the 50 miles wearing leather oxford shoes. American citizens (mistakenly) thought the president had challenged the public to undertake 50-mile hikes. The Council office quickly explained that while walking for exercise was encouraged, the Council was not sponsoring or rewarding 50-mile hikes.

But the public response to the perceived challenge from the president signaled that the Council's physical fitness message was hitting home and gave the

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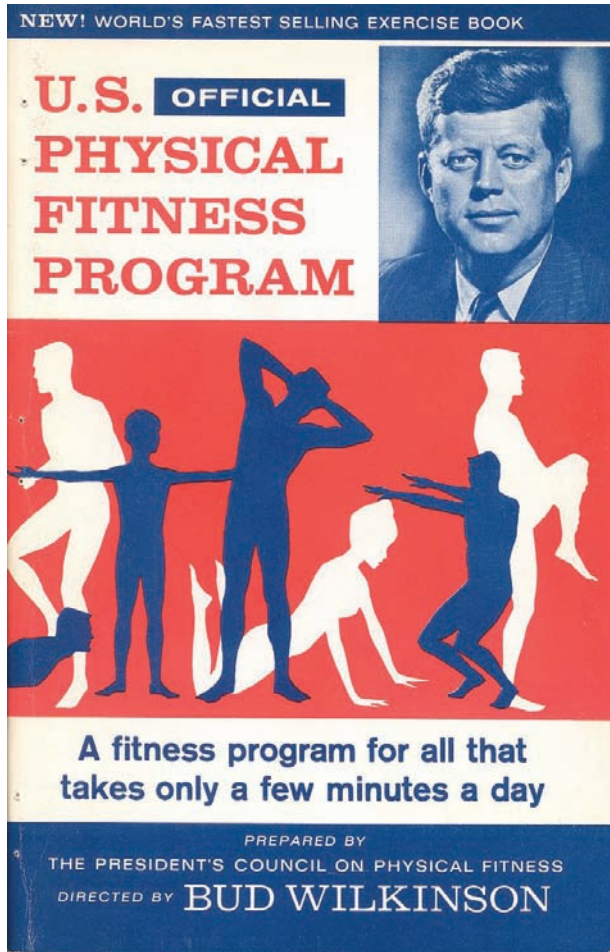
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### President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1969

President Lyndon B. Johnson went forward with the Council programs put in place during the Kennedy administration. President Johnson initially appointed baseball star Stan Musial as Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness; when Musial resigned to take a position in professional sports management, the president asked Vice President Hubert Humphrey to serve as both Council chairman and Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness. President Johnson later appointed Capt. James A. Lovell, U.S. Navy, an astronaut for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to be Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness. President Johnson's Council was the last to have the Cabinet secretaries serve as its members.

To collect data for development of new norms for youth aged 10 to 17, the Council conducted the second national fitness survey in 1964. Based on the results of the survey, the Council established its longstanding award for youth fitness, the beginning of its signature program.

Established in 1966, the Presidential Physical Fitness Award for exceptional achievement was originally administered by the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER). The award recognized children in good academic standing who scored in the upper 15th percentile on activities such as a softball throw, a broad jump, a 50-yard dash, and a 600-yard walk/run.

President Johnson strongly believed that participation in sports was an important part of physical fitness. In 1968, he expanded the Council's mandate to include sports and renamed the Council the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (Executive Order 11398). The Council undertook the supervision of the National Summer Youth Sports Program, which provided sports instruction, competition, nutritious lunches, and medical screening for disadvantaged youth. Located on college campuses, the program was administered by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, under Council supervision.

Convinced that fitness was a major health issue, President Johnson broadened the Council's role to include conducting

Council legitimacy among its most important audience: average Americans. The country readily embraced a public awareness campaign promoting physical fitness by the National Advertising Council, which blanketed 650 television stations and 3,500 radio stations. Even *Peanuts* creator Charles Schulz and other cartoonists joined the campaign by promoting exercise in cartoon strips.

Aging boomers today recall exercising to "Chicken Fat," a fun song performed by Robert Preston and written by "The Music Man" himself, Meredith Willson, to support the popular cause of physical fitness.

A million school children took part in Council-sponsored pilot projects to test children's fitness levels. Numerous other national projects were developed, including state demonstration centers to serve as a showcase for model elementary and secondary physical education programs. Other projects included clinics and the production of educational films and booklets.

Although both youth and adult fitness had been the focus of the Council's mission throughout the Kennedy administration, during his final year in office, the president officially expanded the Council's mission to include Americans of all ages (Executive Order 11074, Jan. 9, 1963) and renamed the organization the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

***"The fitness of our nation for the tasks of our times can never be greater than the general physical fitness of our citizens. A people proud of their collective heritage will take pride in their individual health, because we cannot stay strong as a country if we go soft as citizens."***

**President Lyndon B. Johnson**

cooperative programs with the medical professions to stimulate research. The Council increasingly provided technical assistance to school systems and departments of education to improve health and fitness programs.





Near the end of his term, President Johnson moved the Council from the White House to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (later renamed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), where it remains today.

**President Richard M. Nixon, 1969-1974**

When Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968, Capt. James A. Lovell followed protocol and turned in his resignation so that the new president could appoint his own consultant. Nixon invited Lovell to stay on both as Consultant to the President and as Chairman of the Council. It was a year before Lovell's famous *Apollo 13* flight.

Lovell recommended that the president appoint physical fitness experts and athletes to be members of the Council. This recommendation was enthusiastically supported by health and fitness organizations, sports professionals, and physical educators.

In 1970 (Executive Order 11562), President Nixon eliminated the Cabinet structure of the Council and created a council comprised of 15 nationally-recognized fitness and sports figures as members, with Lovell as chairman. President Nixon gave the Council a new charter, and the position of executive director was created. The Council was given an executive director and a professional staff that included V.L. Nicholson, Glenn V. Swengros, and Dr. Richard Keelor. The Council also appointed special advisors in 1970, to stimulate the development of physical fitness programs for employees, enhance public relations activities, and explore the possibility of private support for Council projects.

During the Nixon administration (1971), the Council published the first issue of *Physical Fitness Research Digest*, a quarterly edited by research consultant Harrison Clarke. In 1972, the Council created a new award, the Presidential Sports Award, to motivate both youth and adults to commit to long-term participation in sports and fitness activities. The Presidential Physical Fitness Awards school program was expanded to allow use by recreation departments and youth groups such as Scouts and Boys and Girls Clubs as well as school physical education programs. Three conferences on fitness in business and industry were conducted by the Council during President Nixon's administration (1972, 1973, and 1974).

**Below: President Richard Nixon with Christine Spain (left) and Marta Geletkanycz.**



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## THE MAN WITH THE RIGHT STUFF

By Julie Sturgeon

Astronaut Jim Lovell was surprised when President Lyndon B. Johnson phoned him on a Sunday afternoon in 1967, between Lovell's *Gemini* flights and the *Apollo 8* maiden voyage to the moon, and asked him to serve as Consultant of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

"He [the president] said he wanted to nominate me to be the consultant for this group, and I said, 'I'm not in that business - I'm an astronaut, not an athlete or a physical fitness instructor.'" But the president insisted that he wanted someone who could inspire, and Lovell filled that bill. After a sit-down in the White House, Lovell formally said yes. "Then the president looked at his chief of staff and asked, 'What are we going to pay this man?' Well, they couldn't pay me because I was already getting a paycheck from the military. I said I'd take the job and it would just be an extra duty," says Lovell.

But still they hit a snag. Two weeks later, Lovell received a call from the legal department at the White House informing him that he needed to resign from the Navy because the government only allowed one commission at a time. Much as he liked the idea of consulting to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, it didn't outweigh 18 years of tenure in the military, Lovell explained. So the government made an exception to keep Lovell on board with both entities.

Lovell used his new job to marry NASA's attraction for young people with physical activity. He made a series of public service announcements, and worked with NASA to produce a television program following a day in the life of an astronaut, showing how these new heroes in American life train by climbing stairs, running on the beach, and with other physical fitness routines.

During the first meeting of the new Council in November 1970, Lovell outlined a call to action:

"We have a tremendous opportunity, perhaps the biggest any of us will ever have. It's the opportunity to help create a society in which our people are committed to the ideas of good health and physical fitness. Some of us have been talking about a physically fit America for years. Now we have our chance to do something about it."

To perform his dual appointments as a commissioned officer in the Navy and as chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Lovell borrowed one of NASA's T-38 airplanes and flew from Houston into Washington, D.C., every week to work on Council business in the office reserved for him in the Old Executive Office Building on 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

"I was the oldest consultant in Washington during the Watergate period, when everyone left," he jokes from his Chicago office today. Lovell had a White House pass and a White House limo at his service. "I didn't like that myself and didn't use it," Lovell says. Instead, he used his influence to help expand the Council's awards programs to community groups such as Boys and Girls Clubs.

Yet he couldn't refuse the visible role his Council commitment played in his life. He recalls with pride helping Eunice Shriver launch the Special Olympics, and welcoming the Russian Olympic athletes at a State Department dinner. "This was the time when things were still kinda tight with the U.S.S.R., but the State Department had a big stand-up buffet featuring the five Olympic rings all made from fresh fruits," he says. "These guys and gals had not seen that much fresh fruit and, by the time the event ended, there wasn't one piece left on the rings." Lovell accompanied Council Executive Director Carson Conrad as a representative at the 1972 Munich Olympic games, but left before the tragic kidnappings occurred.

"I was very proud to spend 11 years with the program," Lovell says of his involvement. He ultimately served two Republican and two Democratic administrations. "The Council is one of those non-partisan organizations that works quite well in both atmospheres," he notes. "Physical fitness is an American goal."

***With the U.S. space program at the forefront of national attention, Lovell was asked by President Lyndon B. Johnson to be a consultant to the PCPFS.***



LBJ Library photo by Mike Geissinger





President Nixon was credited with reorganizing the Council and for bringing an executive director and professional staff on board to actualize Council programs. C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad served as the Council's first executive director (1970-1984).

**President Gerald R. Ford, 1974-1977**

President Gerald R. Ford was an excellent role model for Americans to emulate. An enthusiastic skier who swam daily, President Ford welcomed the recommendations of his Council, under the leadership of Capt. Lovell, who stressed that physical fitness must be a national priority. Despite the best efforts of the Council, youth fitness tests showed no gains; rejection rates in the armed forces remained high; and the economic costs of poor health were increasing rapidly. Endorsing the Council's goals, objectives, and projects fully, President Ford issued Executive Order 11562 (Oct. 25, 1976), which referred for the first time to the Council's responsibility to assist business, industry, government, and labor organizations in establishing physical fitness programs to promote better health and reduce the costs of physical inactivity. Ford's executive order also emphasized the Council's role in educating the public about the connection between physical activity and good health.

C. Carson Conrad was executive director of the Council during the Ford administration.

**President James E. Carter, 1977-1981**

President Jimmy Carter was an outspoken and passionate advocate and role model for physical fitness - he was a regular jogger and walker who also enjoyed tennis and bowling. President Carter made himself readily available to speak about the importance of physical fitness and appeared at Council meetings and conferences. As keynote speaker at the National Conference on Physical Fitness and

Sports, President Carter described fitness programs as "the best possible investment in health." C. Carson Conrad was executive director of the Council during the Carter administration.

**President Ronald W. Reagan, 1981-1989**

Although he was the oldest man to serve as the nation's chief executive, President Ronald Reagan took an active role in the physical fitness program of his Council and frequently met with Council members, consultants, advisors, and staff at the White House. President Reagan also appeared in TV and print advertising campaigns promoting fitness and sent a taped message to an awards dinner for the National Fitness Foundation in New York. What was arguably his most influential contribution was his appointment of dynamic and proactive NFL coach George Allen (1981-87) as chairman of the Council. In response to Allen's recommendations, President Reagan issued Executive Order 12399 (Dec. 31, 1982), which called for the Council to do the following:

- enlist the active support and assistance of individual citizens, civic groups, private enterprise, voluntary organizations, and others in efforts to promote and improve the fitness of all Americans through regular participation in physical fitness and sports activities;



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# The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness



**Top: President Jimmy Carter meets with the PCPFS. Above: President Gerald Ford. Right: NFL football coach George Allen served as Council chairman of the PCPFS from 1981-87.**

- initiate programs to inform the general public of the importance of exercise and the link between regular physical activity, good health, and effective performance;
- strengthen coordination of federal services and programs relating to physical fitness and sports participation and invite appropriate federal agencies to participate in an interagency committee to coordinate physical fitness and sports activities within the federal government;
- encourage state and local governments to emphasize the importance of regular physical fitness and sports participation;
- seek to advance the physical fitness of children, youth, adults, and senior citizens by systematically encouraging the

- development of community recreation, physical fitness, and sports participation programs;
- develop cooperative programs with medical, dental, and other similar professional societies to encourage the implementation of sound physical fitness practices and sports medicine services;





- stimulate and encourage research in the areas of sports medicine, physical fitness, and sports performance;
- assist educational agencies at all levels in developing high-quality, innovative health and physical education programs that emphasize the importance of exercise to good health;
- assist recreation agencies and national sports governing bodies at all levels in developing "sports for all" programs to emphasize the value of sports to physical, mental, and emotional fitness;
- assist business, industry, government, and labor organizations in establishing sound physical fitness programs to elevate employee fitness and reduce the financial and human costs resulting from physical inactivity.

Ever the enthusiastic coach and motivator throughout his six-year tenure as chairman, Allen stimulated the Council to stretch, to imagine all possibilities and make them happen. Under his leadership, the Council established regional sports clinics and private-sector employee programs; established programs to inform the general public of the importance of exercise and the link between regular physical activity, good health, and effective performance; conducted public service advertising campaigns (usually two major media campaigns a year); worked with the U.S. Postal Service to issue a physical fitness postage stamp; published a Council newsletter;

**President Reagan and longtime PCPFS staff member Glenn Swengros.**



Photo courtesy of Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

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National Fitness Leaders Association

*Top: PCPFS Chairman George Allen (second from right) conducts a Council meeting. Above: Allen with four of the ten 1988 recipients of the Healthy American Fitness Leaders Award (left to right): Denise Austin, James Lovell, Tenley Albright, and Gayle Barron. Left: President Ronald Reagan light-heartedly demonstrates strength training.*





**Left: Asahel ("Ash") Hayes at the 1983 White House Symposium on Physical Fitness and Sports Medicine. Hayes was PCPFS executive director from 1984-1989. Right: C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad, the PCPFS' first executive director, served throughout the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations and the first Reagan term (1970-1984).**

published numerous public information materials in cosponsorship with private companies and groups; established Governors' Councils on Physical Fitness, State Demonstration Centers, and State Games; established the State Champion program recognizing schools with the highest percentage of students earning awards; expanded activities for the Presidential Sports Award; cosponsored medical symposiums for physicians and physical educators, which focused on the role of exercise in disease prevention; organized the National Fitness Coalition, a cooperative effort by the Council, the National Recreation and Parks Association, and the National Association of Governors' Councils; and initiated National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, encouraging local communities to increase participation in sports and fitness activities such as fitness fairs, fun walks and runs, media events, and panel discussions.

Other initiatives spearheaded by Allen and the other Reagan administration Council members were the National Fitness Foundation; the U.S. Fitness Academy; the National Fitness Classic; the Adult Fitness Card; the National Fitness Testing Week; and Youth Fitness Forums.

During the Reagan administration, the Council appointed 44 special advisors. In 1983, the Council hosted the White House Symposium on Physical Fitness and Sports Medicine and proclaimed May as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. In 1984, the Council sponsored the National Conference on Youth Fitness; held six regional public hearings on physical fitness and physical education; and

sponsored the first National Women's Leadership Conference on Fitness, with the first lady as honorary chair.

During that period, the Council, in cooperation with the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), introduced a program known as "Fitnessgram," based on the AAHPERD National Youth Fitness Test. The program was developed by the Institute for Aerobic Research and funded by the Campbell Soup Company. A pilot study was conducted in Oklahoma during the 1982-83 school year and expanded the following year.

In 1985, the National School Population Fitness Survey was conducted, the last survey of its kind by the Council. This resulted in the establishment of a new award, the National Physical Fitness Award, to recognize children who scored between the 50th and 85th percentiles on the Presidential Physical Fitness Test, as well as children who performed at the 85th percentile and above, who continued to receive the Presidential Physical Fitness Award.

By the mid-1980s, the youth fitness test had five components: sit-ups; pull-ups, push-ups, or flexed-arm hang to measure upper body strength; a one-mile walk/run; a V-sit reach; and the shuttle run. In 1986, the Council adopted the name "President's Challenge Youth Physical Fitness Awards Program" for its youth physical fitness testing. In 1988, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), in collaboration with the University of Indiana School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER), became the administrator of the President's Challenge program.



One of the most popular initiatives undertaken by the Reagan administration was the Healthy American Fitness Leaders Awards (1984 to 1996). The annual awards banquet, cosponsored by Allstate Insurance and the Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees), recognized 10 outstanding fitness leaders each year. The awardees eventually formed the National Fitness Leaders Association (NFLA), headquartered in Washington, D.C.

C. Carson Conrad served as executive director during President Reagan's first term; Asahel E. ("Ash") Hayes was executive director from 1984-1989.

### George H.W. Bush, 1989-1993

By appointing Arnold Schwarzenegger as his Council chairman, President George H. W. Bush achieved a level of recognition and popular awareness of the Council unseen since the days of President Kennedy. "Arnold" (as everyone called the chairman) understood how to use the celebrity gained as a body builder (seven-time winner of Mr. Olympia) and as a Hollywood film star to give maximum exposure to the Council and its messages. On his own initiative and at his own expense, Schwarzenegger traveled to all 50 states to advocate personally to governors the need for daily, quality physical education in American schools.

**Great American Workouts.** During Schwarzenegger's tenure as chairman, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month became a nationally televised celebration, when President and Mrs. Bush joined Arnold and other celebrity athletes and Hollywood personalities at "Great American Workouts" held on the White House lawn during President Bush's administration.

Council administrative changes under the Bush administration included an increase in the number of Council members from 15 to 20, and an increased emphasis on public-private collaborations on physical fitness programs and initiatives.

**President Bush visits with actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, in the White House to discuss goals and objectives for the Council.**



In 1989, the Council was named lead agency on the physical activity and fitness priority area of the government report, "Healthy People 2000," published every 10 years by the HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) served as science advisor.

***"What a dynamic time to serve as a member of the President's Council! Arnold Schwarzenegger and President Bush had such a passion for fitness and health. We worked very hard to make a difference, especially to the youth of this country."***

**Peter Vidmar**

During the administration of President George H.W. Bush, Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell (1989-91) and John Butterfield (1991-93) served as executive directors.

### William J. Clinton, 1993-2001

President Bill Clinton appointed Florence Griffith Joyner ("Flo Jo") and Tom McMillen as Council co-chairs. Olympic track and field medalist Griffith Joyner was both the first woman and the first African American to serve in a Council leadership position. After McMillen's retirement from the Council and Griffith Joyner's untimely death, President Clinton appointed Lee Haney, body builder and eight-time Mr. Olympia winner, as Council chair (1999-2002). Haney was the first African American to serve as sole Council chair.

In 1993, the Council conducted a Strategic Planning Forum to discuss an adult fitness survey and obtain recommendations on how to improve physical activity and fitness among





Americans. Under a partnership with the Advil Foundation, "The Nolan Ryan Fitness Guide" was made available to over 850,000 Americans. In 1994, the Council established the Silver Eagle Award to promote fitness among seniors. That same year, the Council began publishing a quarterly periodical, the PCPFS *Physical Activity and Fitness Research Digest*.

**Get Up, Get Out Campaign.** In 1995, the Council partnered with the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association (SGMA), the International Health and Raquet Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), and the Advertising Council ("Ad Council") to develop a three-year public awareness campaign focusing on youth fitness. Under the catchy slogans "Get Off It" and "Get Up, Get Out," the cutting edge campaign featured spots promoting exercise to sedentary, overweight adults and children.

**Flexing the Nation's Muscle.** In 1996, in partnership with the National Archives and Records Administration, the Council cosponsored "Flexing the Nation's Muscle: Presidents, Physical Fitness and Sports in the American Century," a traveling exhibit about physical activity and fitness among 20th century presidents. The exhibit traveled to presidential libraries around the country before being retired and stored at the Truman Library.

In the mid-1990s, the Council moved its offices to the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and became an increasingly important component of HHS, within the Office of the

Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH), Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS). During this period, studies increasingly revealed the scientific basis for the role played by physical activity and fitness in disease prevention and overall good health.

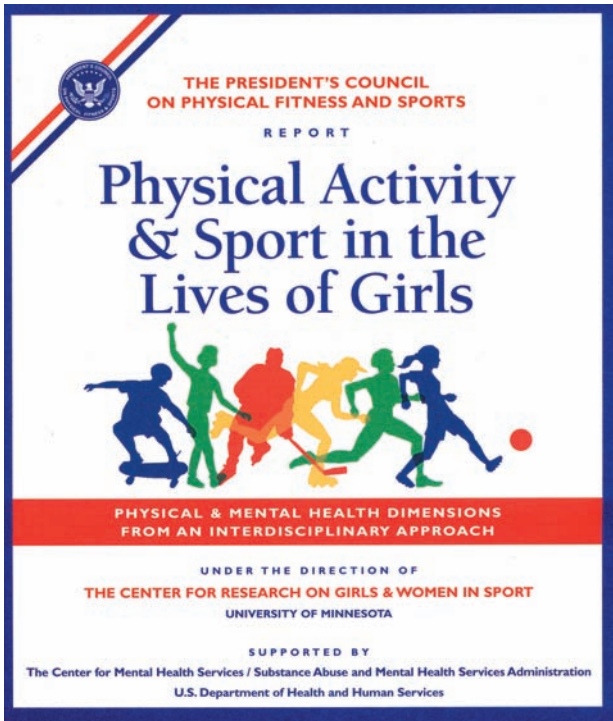
**Healthy People 2010 and Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.** During the Clinton administration, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports served as co-lead with the CDC in developing physical activity and fitness objectives for Healthy People 2010, the government's statement of goals and objectives for the next decade, and as co-lead in the Surgeon General's report "Physical Activity and Health."

The publication in 1996 of the landmark report signaled a major shift in the way physical fitness was viewed and discussed by the general public as well as health and fitness professionals. Now "physical activity" joined "physical fitness" as a recognized essential for good health. Among the findings reported in "Physical Activity and Health" are:

- People of all ages, both male and female, benefit from regular physical activity;
- Significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity (e.g. 30 minutes of brisk walking or raking leaves, 15 minutes of running, or 45 minutes of playing volleyball) on most, if not all, days of the week. Through a modest increase in daily activity, most Americans can improve their health and quality of life.

**President Bill Clinton runs on the National Mall with (left to right) Al Joyner, PCPFS co-chairs Florence Griffith Joyner ("Flo Jo") and Tom McMillen, and Matt Guidry.**





Top right: Sandra Perlmutter, PCPFS executive director, 1993-2001.

- Additional health benefits can be gained through greater amounts of physical activity. People who can maintain a regular regimen of activity that is of longer duration or of more vigorous intensity are likely to derive greater benefit;
- Physical activity reduces the risk of premature mortality in general and of coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes in particular. Physical activity also improves mental health and is important for the health of muscles, bones, and joints.
- Research on understanding and promoting physical activity is at an early stage, but some interventions to promote physical activity through schools, worksites, and healthcare settings have been evaluated and found to be successful.

**Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Girls.** In 1997, the Council published a report, "Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Girls," under the direction of the Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, University of Minnesota. The report described the status of physical activity and sports for women and girls in athletics, discussed the impact of Title IX, and recommended further ways to promote physical activity and sports opportunities for women and girls, noting that young females were twice as likely to be inactive as young males.

**Promoting Better Health For Young People through Physical Activity and Sports.** In 2000, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum, directing the secretaries of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education to identify strategies to improve the nation's youth fitness. The report, "Promoting



Better Health For Young People through Physical Activity and Sports," was submitted to the president in November 2000.

**www.fitness.gov.** In January 2001, shortly before President Clinton left office, the Council launched [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov), a gateway Web site to the vast government information resources available on physical activity, fitness and health.

During the Clinton administration, Sandra Perlmutter was the Council's executive director, the first woman to serve in that position (1993-2001).





**Press conference launching "The Nolan Ryan Fitness Guide." From left to right are James Rippe (Advil Forum on Health Education), HHS Secretary Donna Shalala, baseball great Nolan Ryan, and PCPFS co-chair Tom McMillen (August 1994).**

### President George W. Bush

President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13265 on June 6, 2002, reinvigorating the Council and reaffirming its role in advising and assisting the president and the secretary of Health and Human Services in expanding national awareness of the health benefits of regular physical activity and sports.

On June 20, 2002, President Bush introduced his President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports at a fitness festival and expo on the South Lawn of the White House. In appointing NFL Hall of Fame winner and four-time Super Bowl champion Lynn C. Swann as chairman, and Olympic Softball gold medalist and orthopedic surgeon Dr. Dorothy G. ("Dot") Richardson as vice chair, the president recognized their value as dynamic role models and national spokespersons.

Highly sought-after motivational speakers, Swann and Richardson took the president's health and physical activity messages to audiences nationwide through conference presentations and media appearances.

The other members of Bush's Council included professional athletes, U.S. Olympians, physicians, educators, organization leaders, and corporate executives.

**HealthierUS.** When he introduced his Council, President Bush also launched his HealthierUS initiative, based on the premise that anyone can improve health by adopting four basic behaviors:

- Be physically active every day.
- Eat a nutritious diet.
- Get preventive screenings.
- Make healthy choices/avoid risky behaviors

**Prevention.** During the Bush administration, the president, HHS secretaries, the Surgeon General, and the Council members stressed a uniform message: prevention is key to overcoming the nation's health problems. Swann and Richardson testified before several congressional committees about the health benefits of physical activity.

In 2001, the Council introduced a new award, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA), developed as a response to the key findings of the 1996 Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health.

**The President's Challenge Grows Up.** On Jan. 15, 2003, Council Chairman Lynn Swann announced at the National Press Club that for the first time, the President's Challenge awards program would be offered to adults as

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**President George W. Bush greets members of his President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports at the launch of the Council's interactive physical activity and fitness Web site, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), in Dallas, Texas. Council members, left to right: Dot Richardson, Lynn Swann, John Burke, and Tedd Mitchell.**

well as youth. Swann announced that the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) was now available to adults, including seniors, as well as children and teens. Americans of all ages could earn a PALA by being active 30 to 60 minutes a day, five days a week for six weeks.

**[www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org).** A few months later (July 18, 2003), President Bush and Swann launched [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), the Council's interactive physical activity and fitness online program. The new President's Challenge offered an award for active lifestyles (PALA) and for points logged toward earning medals (Presidential Champions award). The more than 100 activities included in the program range from traditional sports and activities, such

as walking, running, swimming, baseball and soccer, to yoga, tai chi, dancing, housework, and gardening.

The President's Challenge interactive Web site was designed to be highly adaptable for individuals, families, schools, after school programs, clubs, workplace wellness programs, sports and fitness facilities, senior centers, and other groups.

The federal government was among the first to utilize the President's Challenge Web site for an employee health program. In fall 2003, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson announced the Secretary's Challenge, an HHS employee physical activity program using the group feature of the President's Challenge Web site. In fall 2004, HHS and the

***"I know you're a better worker if you exercise on a daily basis. I know you'll help keep the health care costs down in America if you exercise on a daily basis. I know your life will be more complete if you exercise."***

**President George W. Bush, Remarks at Fitness Challenge,  
Fort McNair, June 22, 2003**





Office of Personnel Management (OPM) launched the HealthierFeds Physical Activity Challenge for federal employees. Over 30,000 federal employees from 30 agencies participated.

The HHS Office on Disability used the PALA as part of its "I Can Do It, You Can Do It" program to provide adult mentors to children with disabilities, in order to encourage the kids to become active. The Council also partnered with the HHS Administration on Aging's (AoA) "You Can" program to encourage older Americans to take the President's Challenge.

The Web site was adapted for the Wisconsin Governor's Challenge program, launched to motivate citizens of Wisconsin to use the President's Challenge program to become regularly active.

Over 80 corporations, nonprofit organizations, and medical and educational institutions became President's Challenge Advocates during the Web site's first three years, utilizing or sponsoring the President's Challenge program in schools and in the workplace.

**The PCPFS Science Board.** To bring the best available scientific expertise to the Council, the President's Council Science Board was established in 2003. In addition to appointing individual Science Board members, science partnerships were established with the American College of Sports Medicine, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, and the National Athletic Trainers Association.



**Revitalizing National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.** In 2004, 2005, and 2006, President Bush issued presidential proclamations calling on all Americans to observe National Physical Fitness and Sports Month ("May Month"). Recalling the "Great American Workouts" held in the early 1990s, the Council of President George W. Bush hosted the HealthierUS Fitness Festival on the National Mall in 2004 and 2005, and the HealthierUS Fitness Challenge at RFK Stadium in 2006, which featured the kickoff of the HealthierUS Veterans program.

Lisa Oliphant was executive director from 2001-2002; Capt. Penelope Royall was acting executive

PCPFS materials



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Elks National Foundation





## VISION, STAMINA, PASSION



*"We're not asking Americans to run marathons or become Olympians and professional athletes. We're asking them to move as much as they can whenever they can – that's the key. Walking, gardening, and helping your friends move to a new house are all physical activities."*

**Lynn Swann**  
PCPFS Chairman 2002 - 2005



*"We want to offer Americans more than a mandate for fitness. We want to give them inspiration and tools to motivate them. Our job is to help people to start being active now and stay active for life."*

**John Burke**  
PCPFS Chairman 2006 - present

Lynn Swann, a former Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver, four-time Super Bowl champion, and an ABC broadcaster, went online to apply to serve on the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports under President George W. Bush. Swann was appointed chairman during Bush's first term.

John Burke, who served on the Council with Swann, was appointed by the president to serve as chairman during his second term. Burke is credited with taking the lead in expanding the reach and range of the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program and with spearheading [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), the Council's Web-based motivational program, which was launched only a year after he proposed its development.

Both Swann and Burke recognized in the president a kindred spirit. "I knew the president believed in physical activity as a means of staying healthy and being able to focus better and concentrate," Swann says. Like Bush, Burke – who is president of Trek Bicycles – has a business background.

"Our chairmen have vision, stamina, and a passion about their mission – to improve the health and fitness of the nation," says Melissa Johnson, PCPFS executive director, who conveys the Council's recommendations to the president and HHS secretary and implements the programs.





director from 2002-2003; Melissa Johnson has served as executive director since 2003.

### FIFTY YEARS OF ACTIVATING AMERICANS

About 1980, the health and physical fitness of Americans began a downward spiral, as the rates of overweight and obesity began to climb. The nation now faces a growing public health epidemic, one that threatens the well-being of future generations. As the nation has become more urbanized, motorized, and screen-centered, an increasing number of people lead sedentary lives, and the rates of overweight and obesity continue to soar. The United States has the highest prevalence of obesity in the world.

The children of the 1950s, whose performance on fitness tests shocked President Eisenhower and caused him to establish the President's Council on Youth Fitness, as well as the kids who exercised to the

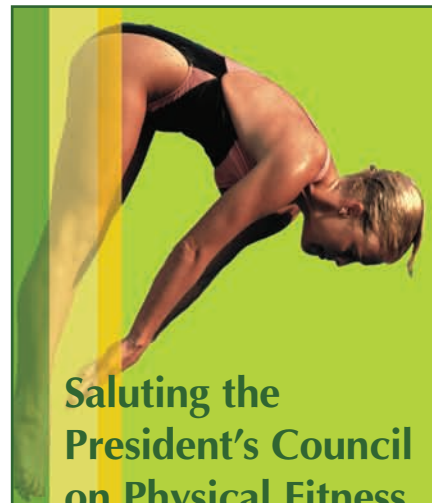
***"We will do all we can to ensure that 50 years from now, when the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports celebrates its Centennial, Americans will look back at this time as a turning point, when the nation began to move away from sedentary living and toward healthy lifestyles and the joy of active living."***

***John Burke, PCPFS Chairman, 2006 - present***

"Chicken Fat" song in the 1960s, are now among the two-thirds of American adults who are overweight or obese. Their children and grandchildren are among 9 million overweight American youth, some of whom are developing type 2 diabetes at as young an age as 8. These are the challenges faced by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports as it enters its next 50 years and charts its future.

For 50 years, the Council has remained constant in adhering to President Eisenhower's original vision – to serve as a stimulator and a catalyst. By activating resources within the public, private, and nonprofit spheres of American life, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports continues to confront a pressing health problem, sedentary behavior, in creative ways that allow for both bipartisanship and continuity.

The authors acknowledge and thank Nancy Hunt Weiman, whose meticulously researched thesis "Some Perspectives on the Development of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports" provided valuable information (George Washington University, 1986); Susan E.B. Schwartz, author of *Into the Unknown: the Remarkable Life of Hans Kraus* ([www.susanebschwartz.com](http://www.susanebschwartz.com)), for information about the events leading up to the establishment of the Council; Christine Spain, the Council's director of Research, Planning and Special Projects, for sharing her insights and institutional knowledge of the Council; Leslie Liff for maintaining a valuable archive on the Council during his more than 40 years of service on the PCPFS staff in Washington, DC; Tynetta Dreher for administrative and editorial support; Joey King for graphic and photo contributions; and Jane Wargo for research and editorial assistance.



## Saluting the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports 50th Anniversary

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## PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS

# COUNCIL MEMBERS AND EXECUTIVES

(July 1956 - May 2006)

### **Administration: Dwight D. Eisenhower**

July 16, 1956: President's Council on Youth Fitness

Established

Richard M. Nixon, Vice President, Chairman (1956-57)

Fred Seaton, Secretary of the Interior, Chairman  
(1957-58)

Ezra Benson, Secretary of Agriculture

James Mitchell, Secretary of Labor

Herbert Brownell, Jr., Attorney General

Neil McElroy, Secretary of Defense

Marion Folsom, Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare

Arthur Fleming, Secretary of Health, Education &  
Welfare

Lewis Strauss, Secretary of Commerce

Frederick Mueller, Secretary of Commerce

Albert Cole, House and Home Finance Administration

Shane McCarthy, Executive Director

### **Administration: John F. Kennedy**

Council renamed President's Council on Physical Fitness

Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education &  
Welfare, Chairman (1961-63)

Anthony Celebrezze, Secretary of Health, Education &  
Welfare, Chairman (1963)

Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture

Stuart Udall, Secretary of the Interior

Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense

Arthur Goldberg, Secretary of Labor

W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor

Luther Hodges, Secretary of Commerce

John Conner, Secretary of Commerce

Robert Kennedy, Attorney General

Robert Weaver, House and Home Finance  
Administration

Charles (Bud) Wilkinson, Consultant to the President on  
Physical Fitness

Richard ("Dick") Snider, Council Administrator

### **Administration: Lyndon B. Johnson**

Council renamed President's Council on Physical Fitness  
and Sports

Anthony Celebrezze, Secretary of Health, Education &  
Welfare, Chairman (1963-67)

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Chairman (1968)  
and Consultant to the President

Orville Freeman, Secretary of Agriculture

W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor

John Gardener, Secretary of Health, Education and  
Welfare

Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense

Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense

Alex Trowbridge, Secretary of Commerce

Cyrus Smith, Secretary of Commerce

Robert Weaver, Secretary of Housing and Urban  
Development

Ramsey Clark, Attorney General





Dean Rusk, Secretary of State  
Bertrand Harding, Office of Economic Opportunity  
Stan Musial, Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness  
Capt. James A. Lovell, Consultant to the President on Physical Fitness  
Robert Stewart, Council Administrator  
John P. Wilbern, Council Administrator

**Administration: Richard M. Nixon**

Capt. James A. Lovell, Chairman  
Roone Arledge  
John Boyer  
William Bradley  
James Daniell  
Judi Ford  
Samuel Foxx, III  
Warren Giese  
Sammy Lee  
Alex Maleski  
Thomas McMillen  
Roswell Merrick  
Frederick Hovde  
Owen Kiernan  
Bobby Richardson  
C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad, Executive Director

**Administration: Gerald R. Ford**

Capt. James A. Lovell, Chairman  
Tenley Albright  
Ruth Alexander  
Roone Arledge  
William Bradley  
John Byrne  
James Daniell  
Judi Ford  
Samuel Fox, III  
Warren Giese  
Elder Marion Hanks  
Sammy Lee  
Donn Moomaw  
Deborah Mazzanti  
John Pingel  
C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad, Executive Director

**Administration: James E. Carter**

Gov. Jerry Apodaca, Chairman (1978-80)  
Alfred ("Al") McGuire, Chairman (1980-81)  
Hank Aaron

Anita DeFrantz  
Mary Joanne Johnson  
Sammy Lee  
Billy Mills  
Dr. James Nicholas  
Claude Terry, Jr.  
LeRoy Walker  
Abbi Fisher  
Dorothy Hamill  
Dinah Shore  
Joseph Smith  
Alton White, Sr.  
C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad, Executive Director

**Administration: Ronald W. Reagan**

George Allen, Chairman (1981-87)  
Richard Kazmaier, Chairman (1988-89)  
Bernard Cahill  
Donald Cooper  
Tomas Fatjo, Jr.  
Warren Giese  
Dorothy Hamill  
William LaMothe  
Donn Moomaw  
Wayne Newton  
Mark Saginor  
Roger Staubach  
Ronald Walker  
Leon Weil  
David Werblin  
Jere Thompson  
Mitch Gaylord  
Robert Levy  
Charles Luckman  
George Armstrong  
James Gilmore, Jr.  
Frederic Malek  
Pam Shriver  
Harry Walters  
C. Carson ("Casey") Conrad, Executive Director (1980-84)  
Asahel ("Ash") E. Hayes, Executive Director (1984-89)

**Administration: George H. W. Bush**

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chair  
Suzanne Timken, Vice Chair  
George Armstrong  
Bernard Cahill  
Thomas Fatjo, Jr.



## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness

Mitch Gaylord  
Warren Giese  
James Gilmore, Jr.  
Richard Kazmaier  
Donn Moomaw  
Wayne Newton  
Mark Saginor  
Pam Shriver  
Harry Walters  
David Werblin  
George Armstrong  
Jane Blalock  
Donald Cooper  
Frederic Malek  
Myrna Patrich  
Corey Ser Vaas  
Christine Silkwood  
Peter Vidmar  
Gary Visconti  
Christine Evert  
Earvin "Magic" Johnson  
Jackie Joyner-Kersee  
Sammy Lee  
James Lorimer  
Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez  
Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell, Executive Director  
(1989-91)  
John Butterfield, Executive Director (1991-93)

### Administration: William J. Clinton

Tom McMillen (1993-98) Co-Chair  
Florence Griffith Joyner (1993-98) Co-Chair  
Lee Haney, Chair (1999-2002)  
Don Casey, Vice Chair (2000-2002)  
Elizabeth Arendt  
Jeff Blatnick  
Ralph Boston  
Tim Finchem  
Rockne Freitas  
Zina Garrison  
Veronica Goldberg  
Jimmie Heuga  
Calvin Hill  
Jim Kelly  
Judith Kieffer  
Deborah Slaner Larkin  
Ira Leesfield  
Albert Mead, III  
Jack Mills

Kevin Saunders  
Amber Travsky  
Ellen Pena  
Nikki McCray  
Kenneth Preminger  
Billy Blanks  
Lauren Gregg  
Sandra Perlmutter, Executive Director (1993-2001)

### Administration: George W. Bush

Lynn Swann, Chair (2002-2005)  
John Burke, Chair (2006-)  
Dorothy ("Dot") Richardson, Vice Chair  
Denise Austin  
James Baird  
Paul Carrozza  
Katherine Cosgrove Van Horn  
Amanda Cromwell  
Pamela Danberg  
Jaime Davidson  
Dan Gable  
Nomar Garciaparra  
Marion Jones  
Ivette Lirio  
Nancy Lopez  
Tedd Mitchell  
Charles Moore  
Derek Parra  
Emmitt Smith  
Lloyd Ward  
William Greer  
Catherine Baase  
Kirk Bauer  
Steven Bornstein  
Susan Lieberman Dell  
Lillian Green-Chamberlain  
Donna Richardson Joyner  
Edward Laskowski  
Elisha Nelson Manning  
Jerry Noyce  
Mary Lou Retton  
Andrew Roddick  
W. Edgar Weldon  
Lisa Oliphant, Executive Director, 2001-2002  
Capt. Penelope Slade Royall, Acting Executive Director,  
2002-2003  
Melissa Johnson, Executive Director, 2003-present





# PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH LEADS BY EXAMPLE

## America's Fittest President Calls on Americans to Be Physically Active Every Day

By Michael A. Robinson

**O**f the president of the United States, arguably the nation's busiest person, thinks it's important to make time in his day for physical activity, what excuse is there for the rest of us to say we don't have time to be active? President George W. Bush often challenges Americans to be physically active every day, and he leads by example.

The president considers exercise so important for health and productivity that he sometimes quizzes prospective administration employees about their exercise routines. Journalists and others who have seen the president run, cycle, or work out with gym equipment say he is incredibly fit and have reported this fact often since the president took office in January 2001.

In 2005, he rode a bicycle with Lance Armstrong, seven-time winner of the grueling Tour de France. If the president at the age of nearly 60 can hold his own with one of America's best athletes, a man in his thirties, the president must be in good shape. Cycling with Armstrong, fitness experts agree,

was a terrific example to set, with perfect timing. As government statistics indicate that obesity in the United States continues to rise, President Bush shows that physical activity such as bicycling is not only good for you, it can be a social opportunity to have fun.

"I think all those associations are significant," says fitness industry leader John McCarthy, who served as executive director of the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), an industry trade group based in Boston. Despite the media's preoccupation with America's growing waistline - or perhaps because of it - the industry is booming, says McCarthy. "We are a celebrity culture. We like to know what celebrities are doing. I'm not saying we mimic celebrities, but we do take them as sort of clues to behavior. And if we see smart, successful people exercising, that is a clue to how we should behave."

McCarthy notes that the president is "an exceptionally great role model, particularly for middle-aged men, and I say that because one of the biggest reasons why millions of



middle-aged men don't get enough exercise is that they say they're too busy. Yet President Bush finds time to get regular exercise." McCarthy notes that the president enjoys a variety of activities. "He works out on standard gym equipment. He works out on treadmills and on ellipticals, and he does a lot of strength work and flexibility work. He gets a lot of different types of exercise. So, another subliminal message is find something you like to do. The president does lots of different things."

McCarthy estimates that nearly 41.3 million Americans, roughly 15 percent of the entire U.S. population, belonged to some form of athletic club in early 2005, the last period for which statistics were available. These include commercial establishments as well as community organizations like the Jewish Community Center and the YMCA/YWCA. An additional 25.4 million

Americans used a health club as non-members, and the number of health clubs rose by 14 percent to 26,830 in 2004.

In addition, says McCarthy, the statistics mirror the long-term health of the fitness industry. Seen as a barometer of the overall fitness market, IHRSA members have grown their customer base at a compound rate of 5.5 percent since 1995, meaning athletic club membership is doubling every 13 years.

The young adult market remains vital for the fitness industry. But the real boom in recent years stems from an influx of older Americans looking to get in shape, according to IHRSA, which reports that people over 55 represent the "defining characteristic" of the industry's recent growth. In 2004, some 10.2 million individuals over the age of 55 belonged to health clubs, an increase of 562 percent over 1987.

***Promoting physical fitness for government workers, President Bush and Paul Carrozza, left, a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, set the pace for 400 White House staff members as they run a three-mile race around the parade grounds at Ft. McNair in Washington, D.C., in June 2002. The president, then 55, finished the race in 20 minutes and 27 seconds.***



AP photo by J. Scott Applewhite





## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness

Fortunately for the fitness industry, not only has the current president made working out a priority, but his predecessor lent his powerful image to the movement as well. President Bill Clinton was often photographed jogging with a contingent of Secret Service agents.

Clinton, who also turns 60 in 2006, is six weeks younger than President Bush. Much of the fitness industry's growth took place during their presidencies, an era when the obesity epidemic received wide attention, particularly among the baby boomer generation.

For his part, McCarthy agrees with a wide range of observers who say that President Bush may rank as the healthiest and most physically fit president in history.

"Not only does he like lots of activities," McCarthy says, "but he is also a classic fitness guy. He believes in cardiovascular fitness, he believes in [musculoskeletal] fitness, and he believes in flexibility, because he works on all three of those things. So in some sense, he's a case study for anybody who wants to be fit. He's working on all three vital dimensions of physical fitness. His annual health report cards

have been exceptionally strong in terms of everything – in terms of his resting heart rate, in terms of cholesterol level and other measures. He is genetically blessed, and he's taking very good care of himself."

"You have a paradox of a fitness revolution and a fatness epidemic at the same time," says Amby Burfoot, executive editor of *Runner's World*, a magazine for running enthusiasts. "There's no doubt about the obesity crisis hitting the country. It tends to be in lower income groups and it tends to be in this next generation of kids, the video gamers, and that's something we are all very, very concerned about."

President Bush was on the cover of *Runner's World* when he did the National Fitness three-mile run and granted the publication an exclusive interview.

Burfoot says running has become a popular metaphor for people who are willing to push themselves to the limit to accomplish their objectives and says he sees running in print and television advertisements that have nothing to do with the sport. But those images reinforce the notion that running and success go together.

**President George W. Bush used this 2002 Fitness Fair on the South Lawn of the White House to promote active lifestyles. Below: President Bush introduces his President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Opposite: The president, an avid outdoorsman himself, spends some time with children at a camping and kayaking display.**



PCPF's photo



According to Burfoot, “business leaders these days like to be portrayed as, if not young, at least vigorous, active, disciplined, having marathon-like or triathlon-like qualities, because you know that’s what they want to show to the public and to their employees and to their investors – that they’re serious, that they’re focused, and they know how to go the whole course from beginning to end. The real key with running anyway is the simplicity of the sport, the fact that you can get in a really serious health-enhancing workout in just 30 minutes. For management and executive types, everything is time management, and if you can do that workout and have it really be a good workout, which we know it is in 30 minutes, that just counts a whole lot.”

Burfoot and his editorial staff were surprised at how well Bush ran the National Fitness race, and the editor still sounds excited at the memory of the president tearing up the course.

“We ran the article and said the president ran the first half mile in 3 minutes and 15 seconds,” Burfoot said. “Well, nobody believed us because that’s really fast. But this guy (our reporter) running with him was a very experienced runner and marathoner and he was like, ‘the

president was flying out there.’ I mean, he ran a 7-minute pace for the whole thing. But he went too fast at the beginning and then slowed down a little.”

In an accompanying interview, Bush said he is absolutely committed to exercise. He makes it a top priority and has never, despite injuries, faltered in his commitment to remaining fit since he began running in 1972. He took up the sport at age 25 because he was out of shape and raced in the Boston area while getting his master of business administration from Harvard University.

The president once finished the Houston Marathon in 3:44:52, which would put him in the top 25 percent of the roughly 3,400 men who finished the 26-mile event. The president has now switched from running to bicycling and often goes mountain biking on his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Burfoot is happy that the president has found other activities he enjoys: “I think it’s incredibly important for any and all leaders to show that there’s time in their day for fitness, which we believe is very, very important on so many different planes.”

When it comes to physical activity, the president told *Runner’s World*, “I believe anyone can make time. As a





matter of fact, I don't believe it – I know it. If the president of the United States can make time, they can make time. A healthy workforce is a more productive workforce. We have got to do a better job of encouraging that in America." The president advises Americans to be physically active every day, eat a nutritious diet, get regular preventive screenings, and make healthy lifestyle choices/avoid risky behaviors.

Canadian exercise physiologist Michael Bracko supports President Bush's emphasis on physical activity. He says just being active is far more important than emphasizing cardiovascular exercise or focusing on how much someone weighs. Worrying about body weight and getting the "proper" work out can be self-defeating concepts for many people and can inhibit a healthy lifestyle.

A member of the American College of Sports Medicine and a former U.S. resident, Bracko is an expert on training high-performance athletes at the Institute for Hockey Research in Alberta, Canada. He recalls being impressed by photos of the late President Ronald Reagan riding horses.

"I thought that was really, really good of the media to show him doing something recreational," Bracko says. "Now, it's not necessarily the same as running or weight lifting, but it's also important to have some type of physical activity. If you can't exercise, then be physically active because, you know, there are different levels of fitness. If we could take our focus off of how we look and focus more on how we feel, that would be really good. If you can only exercise three days a week and that's just not enough to reduce your body fat, you're still going to feel better about yourself, reduce your stress, and sleep better at night. As long as you get out there and exercise, you're definitely going to get some health benefits."

**President Bush and seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, right, take a ride together through a field on the president's ranch in Crawford, Texas, in August 2005.**



## OBSESITY

Obesity experts say millions of Americans need to follow the example of President Bush. By eating too much and remaining sedentary, people gain weight and increase the risk of developing a wide range of medical problems, including hypertension, diabetes, heart conditions, certain cancers, and osteoporosis.

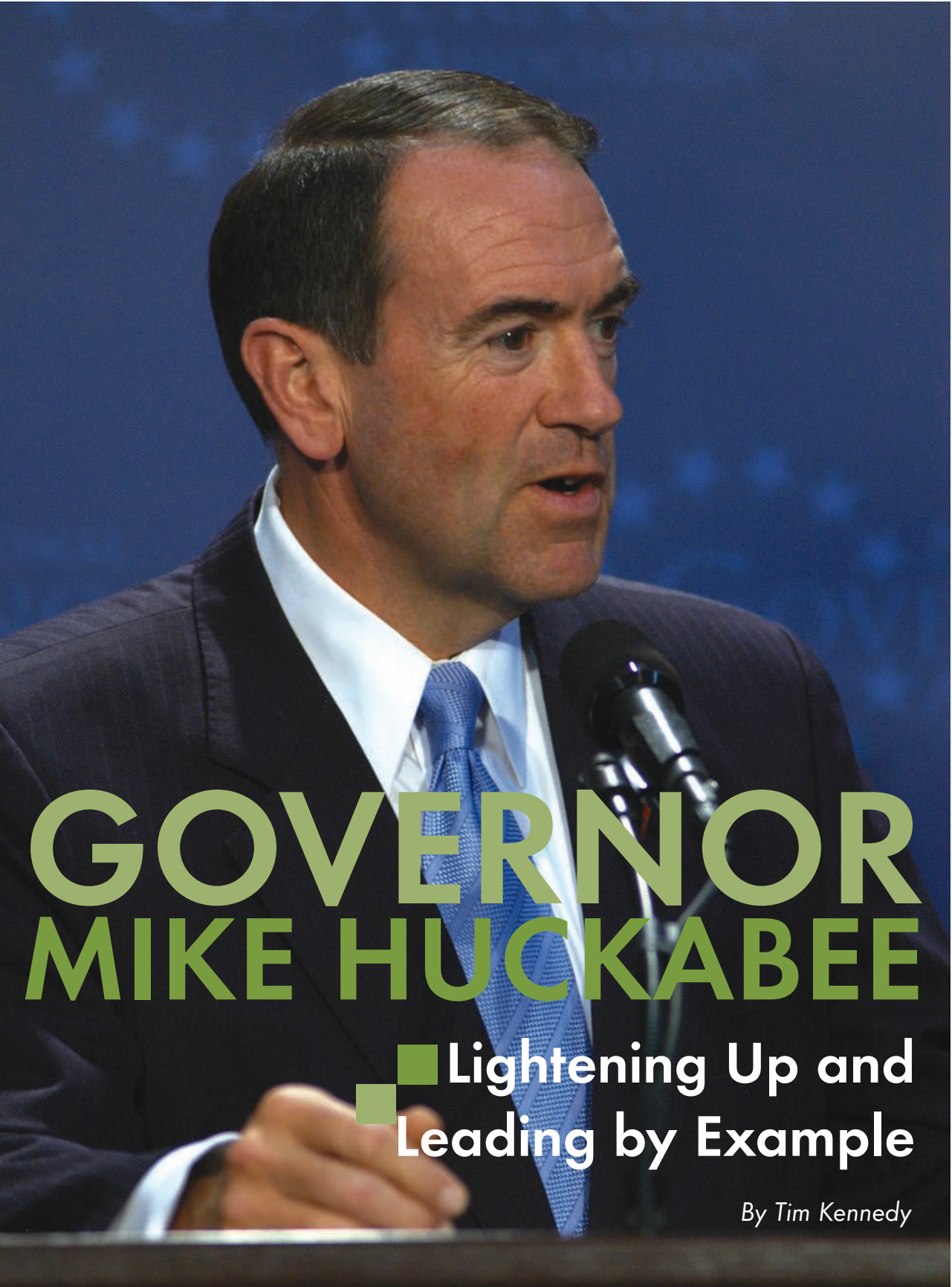
In fact, the American Obesity Association (AOA), an advocacy group, says poor diet and physical inactivity combined claim the lives of roughly 300,000 Americans each year. The group cites several academic or government studies to support this claim, adding that obesity generates roughly \$100 billion in annual medical costs.

However, the group uses a measure known as body mass index (BMI) to make its calculations. This standard is considered somewhat controversial because it often fails to factor in the impact of lean body mass. A simple way of explaining BMI is that it boils down to a function of a person's height versus their weight.

For example, a man who is 5 feet, 10.5 inches tall and weighs 185 pounds would have a body mass index of slightly more than 26, which is technically overweight. However, the true fat content for a weight lifter of this stature could be as low of 20 percent, at the high end of the healthy range.

Nevertheless, with BMI as its guide, AOA officials say obesity is a disease that affects nearly one-third of the adult American population, approximately 60 million people. The number of overweight and obese Americans has continued to increase since 1960, the group says. Today, 64.5 percent of adult Americans, or about 127 million people, are categorized as being at least overweight.

A BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight, and a figure of 30 or more is considered obese. Those with a BMI of 40 or above are classified as severely obese.



# GOVERNOR MIKE HUCKABEE

■ Lightening Up and  
■ Leading by Example

*By Tim Kennedy*

NGA photo





**Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, an outspoken advocate of modifying lifestyles to improve the nation's health, speaks from experience on the issue. Since his 2003 decision to lose weight using common-sense nutrition and moderate exercise, he has shed 110 pounds. These two photos – opposite at a 2005 National Governors Association annual meeting and above at an event previous to his weight loss – show the dramatic difference in his appearance.**

**L**ike many successful politicians, Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee tends to measure his accomplishments by the elections he has won. But for the past three years, he has gauged one of his successes by what he has lost: To date, Huckabee has shed 110 of the 285 pounds he once struggled to carry on his 5-foot, 11-inch frame.

Significantly, Huckabee's decision in 2003 to choose common-sense nutrition and moderate exercise over junk food and inactivity has completely eradicated his type 2 diabetes and inspired him to make preventative health the centerpiece of a statewide public health campaign that has lately earned him national attention.

Huckabee made a 180-degree turn toward healthy living after his doctor informed him that he probably had "at most" another 10 years to live. "I grew up on fried foods," says Huckabee, who – like former President Bill Clinton – was born in Hope, Ark. "Fried chicken, fried green tomatoes, and even fried candy bars."

Recognizing that he had to make some changes in his life, Huckabee sought help from Dr. Phillip Kern, an endocrinologist at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, who created a weight-loss program that modifies a person's metabolism.

Kern's approach to weight loss is simple: change the patient's eating lifestyle and ensure the change is permanent, then incrementally alter the patient's diet in such a way that healthy eating and balanced nutrition eventually become a new – and enjoyable – lifestyle.

The logic behind the regimen, says Kern, is to not only eliminate sugary and high-glycemic-index foods from the diet, but to also precipitate a patient's desire to abandon prior eating habits. For most of the duration of his weight-loss program, Huckabee limited his caloric intake to 1,600 a day and augmented his diet with unlimited portions of vegetables.

### **New Lifestyle Includes Light Exercise**

While Huckabee was changing his diet, he also began a regimen of light exercise – something he shunned all his life. (Huckabee confesses he once needed to rest a few minutes after climbing two flights of marble stairs at the Arkansas statehouse.)

Huckabee's exercise program at first consisted of short walks with Jet, his black Labrador retriever. But, even after losing 40 pounds on Kern's program, a leisurely 12-minute walk left Huckabee panting like, well, Jet after a long run in the hot sun.

## **PERSONAL PROFILE**

**Born:** Aug. 24, 1955; Hope, Ark.

**Education:** Graduated magna cum laude from Ouachita Baptist University, completing his four-year degree in just over two years. Attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

**Professional Career:** Served as pastor of Southern Baptist churches in Arkadelphia, Texarkana, and Pine Bluff, Ark. Was president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention from 1989 to 1991, and also served as president of a religious-oriented television station.

Elected to the post of lieutenant governor of Arkansas in 1993. As the only Republican in statewide office, Huckabee expanded the part-time position and actively used it as a platform to reach the public. Re-elected lieutenant governor in 1994.

Sworn in as governor of Arkansas on July 15, 1996, to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Gov. Jim Guy Tucker.

Elected to a full four-year term as governor in November 1998.

Re-elected to second and final four-year term as governor in November 2002.

**Personal:** Wife, Janet Huckabee; three children, John Mark, David, and Sarah. Enjoys hunting, fishing, reading, and playing bass guitar for his band, Capitol Offense.



**Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee crosses the finish line in the Little Rock Marathon on March 6, 2005, in Little Rock, Ark.**

Huckabee stayed with the exercise program, however, augmenting his increasingly longer walks with brief stints on a stationary bicycle. He also built up his strength with light workouts on an elliptical trainer.

Several months after he began exercising, Huckabee says he made a "spontaneous" decision during one of his daily walks to break into an easy trot and then to run. Huckabee likens his transformation from a walker into a runner to the scene from *Forrest Gump* when the hero is being chased by a group of bullies and, as he starts running, his leg braces fall away. "I was being chased by a lifetime of bad habits and voices telling me I couldn't," says Huckabee. "But that day, I found out I could!"

Huckabee's running schedule was modest at first, but week by week he increased his distances until he was eventually running three and four miles a day. In July 2004, after he lost close to 100 pounds, he completed his first 5K run. Huckabee says his sense of accomplishment after crossing the finish line of this race was better than "winning the Super Bowl." Additional races followed, including participation in 26.2-mile marathon races in Little Rock and the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C.

Today, Huckabee's daily exercise program consists of waking at 4:30 a.m., taking a one-mile warm-up walk with Jet, running or (alternately) cross training, then riding a stationary bike for 30 minutes. Three or four times a week, Huckabee augments his cardio workout with weight-lifting sessions.

Huckabee's diet these days is slightly less regimented than his exercise regimen, but it is completely free of the foods that used to dominate his meals. "I loved what I ate, but it was terrible for me: fried foods, lots of potatoes, gravy, ice cream – just about anything," says Huckabee. "I particularly used to love snack foods and chips."

Resolved to never again consume trans fats, refined sugar, and processed foods, Huckabee now only eats lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. "Today, I have the body chemistry of a teen-ager, and all my blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels are down in the exceptional range."

#### **A State-Wide Program of Good Health**

Having personally experienced the transforming effects of good nutrition and moderate exercise, Huckabee decided to use the bully pulpit of the Arkansas governor's office to





offer his constituents the information necessary to live a healthier life.

The people of Arkansas, like most Americans, suffer from a high incidence of heart disease, stroke, and cancer – diseases directly related to poor eating habits, lack of physical activity, and poor lifestyle choices such as the use of tobacco products.

When Huckabee looked more carefully at the health of his constituents, he discovered that Arkansas was one of the least healthy states in the country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has indicated that Arkansas ranks ninth nationally in mortality due to heart disease and first in stroke mortality. More than 60 percent of Arkansas adults are at an unhealthy weight. A 2003 study found that obesity rates in the state doubled since 1991, when over a quarter of Arkansas adults were found to be obese. Moreover, that same study found 29 percent of Arkansas adults were physically inactive and about 25 percent of adults are current smokers.

Among Arkansas adults, a total of \$663 million was spent on medical expenditures attributable to obesity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/economic\\_consequences.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/economic_consequences.htm) as reported by Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn, and Wang, 2004).

When Huckabee investigated how much money Arkansas could save through prevention, he decided to help the citizens of Arkansas get healthier. With statewide Medicare spending at \$3 billion each year, 77 percent goes

toward the care of patients with so-called “lifestyle illnesses” of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. Of all that is

#### MIKE HUCKABEE'S 11 EATING HABITS FOR OPTIMUM HEALTH

1. I don't eat sugar and avoid processed foods.
2. I cut out eating late at night.
3. I eat a lot of salad and fresh vegetables.
4. I read labels all the time to see what is actually in different foods and avoid junk foods or those with sugar or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.
5. I still eat chicken, beef, and venison, but I eat those meats grilled now.
6. I pretty much cut out fried foods.
7. I keep apples around my home and office. It's amazing how an apple during the day can be enjoyable, and it fills you up at a time when you might normally snack on unhealthy foods.
8. I drink a lot of water.
9. I really cut back on unhealthy starches. I love sliced turkey, but now I eat it rolled up instead of on a sandwich covered with dressing.
10. I try not to let myself get too hungry, and thus I don't get too tempted to eat the wrong things.
11. I realized that eating healthy doesn't mean you can't enjoy what you eat or have a lot to eat.



Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee promotes his Healthy Arkansas initiative.

Photo courtesy of the State of Arkansas, Office of the Governor



spent each year to care for Arkansas Medicare patients with lifestyle diseases, more than half the money – \$1.6 billion – is spent on a mere 3,000 people.

“We must rein in the cost of this program. Otherwise, the growth of Medicaid will continue to erode the resources we have for public education, public safety, and other parts of the state budget,” Huckabee said at a 2004 press briefing. “We must convince Arkansans that the key to real change is behavioral change.

“We eat the wrong foods. We smoke too much. We don’t exercise enough,” Huckabee added. “If a person maintains a normal body weight, exercises at least three times each week, and doesn’t use tobacco, that person will live an average of 13 years longer than he or she would live otherwise.”

Vowing to make prevention a political cause, Huckabee marshaled the state’s top healthcare providers, lawmakers, and business leaders to help him create an all-encompassing initiative that guides the citizens of Arkansas toward optimum health through the modification of their behavior.

The product of this effort is “Healthy Arkansas,” a comprehensive program that helps children, teen-agers, adults, and seniors make simple yet specific behavioral and lifestyle changes necessary for sustainable long-term health. [See sidebar.]

### **Educating the American People About Good Health**

Huckabee’s 2005 election to the chairmanship of the National Governor’s Association (NGA) offered him the opportunity to take his successful statewide health campaign to the nation. “I want to build a culture of physical activity, prevention, and wellness in the United States,” Huckabee said when he announced the launch of the “Healthy America” program at NGA’s 2005 annual meeting in Des Moines, Iowa.

Healthy America builds on the success of the Healthy Arkansas program. It highlights simple yet specific lifestyle changes necessary for sustainable long-term health.

“What’s beautiful about Gov. Mike Huckabee’s Healthy Arkansas and Healthy America programs is that they are a legacy that will survive long after his time as governor and chairman of the NGA has ended,” says Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS). “When Gov. Huckabee speaks, he talks to people’s hearts. He moves people because he’s undergone a remarkable personal experience that changed his entire life.”

Huckabee’s Healthy America program is now seen as a model for how easily citizens can improve their lives. Additionally, at Huckabee’s urging, NGA has convened several bi-partisan conferences where the country’s leading health and wellness experts, researchers, and practitioners identify the health issues affecting the nation, and offer solutions for obesity prevention and wellness promotion. NGA has also held workshops that inform state officials how to utilize the best elements from health enhancement programs

### **HEALTHY ARKANSAS PROGRAM IS A MODEL FOR ALL AMERICANS**

Healthy Arkansas is a comprehensive effort initiated by Gov. Mike Huckabee to clearly define specific areas where behavioral changes can make his constituents healthier. The burden of chronic diseases, including diabetes, stroke, lung and heart diseases, and cancer, is higher in Arkansas than in the nation generally.

Tobacco use, obesity, and physical inactivity are the three primary causes of these and other serious chronic conditions. The Healthy Arkansas Web site (<http://www.arkansas.gov/ha/home.html>) provides strategies to reduce and/or eliminate the three primary behavior-related causes of these diseases with information on nutrition, physical activity, and smoking cessation.

The program offers plain-spoken guidance on nutrition (including dietary guidelines and feeding tips for infants and toddlers), food safety, exercise (for people of all ages at home, at work, and at school), tobacco cessation programs, disease management (for diabetes, heart disease and stroke, and cancer), mental health, substance abuse, injury prevention, women’s health, children’s health (immunization guidance and medical screenings), senior health, and driver safety.

“Each day, we are flooded with health information from TV, radio, and the Internet, so the Healthy Arkansas program boils good health messages down to just a couple of simple sentences,” says Huckabee. “If you get some exercise a couple times a week and if [you] eat right and don’t use tobacco ... you are going to live two years longer. In many ways, it is as simple as that.”

that have worked successfully in corporations and other states.

“A lot of people want to know what my ‘secret’ is,” says Huckabee. “The answer is that there really isn’t a secret. I have changed how and what I eat, and began getting some exercise every week. I think it’s also important to say that I didn’t go on a ‘diet’ as much as I changed a bad lifestyle.

“The best advice I can offer is to urge people to take the first step,” Huckabee adds. “Change one thing about how you eat, and start to get just a little bit of exercise. You will start to notice a difference in how you feel. Common sense and a little bit of discipline will go a long way to getting you to where you want to be. ... I’ve learned that we all need to look at our lives and realize we have a lot to change,” Huckabee says. “I did, and I hope that other people can too.”





# PROGRAMS FOR SUCCESS

## Physical Activity, Fitness, and Sports Initiatives of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

By Craig Collins



**O**f the 1956 creation of the President's Council on Youth Fitness could be traced to one factor, it would be President Dwight D. Eisenhower's reaction when he learned the results of the Kraus-Weber tests, conducted in the 1950s to measure the "minimum muscular fitness" of European and American children. The results of these tests – nearly 60 percent of American children failed, compared to fewer than 9 percent of European children – were indeed shocking, and not just to Eisenhower. His concern was shared by all Americans, and especially by his successor, John F. Kennedy.

The fact that the Council was created shortly before the Soviet Union launched the first manned spacecraft (*Sputnik*) was not mere coincidence. In an article by President Kennedy published in *Sports Illustrated* magazine ("The Soft American," December 1960), the president's rhetoric revealed a Cold War perspective on Americans' poor fitness. His chief concern seemed to be the nation's vulnerability to the Red Army: "Our struggles against aggressors throughout our history have been won on the playgrounds and corner lots and fields of America. Thus, in a very real and immediate sense, our growing softness, our increasing lack of physical fitness, is a menace to our security."

It would be easy to dismiss these mid-century concerns with American fitness as quaint if the nation's collective health had not worsened over the ensuing 50 years. The observations Kennedy describes in "The Soft American" are even more pertinent today than in 1960. "Many of the routine physical activities which earlier Americans took for granted are no longer part of our daily life," Kennedy wrote. "A single look at the packed parking lot of the average high school will tell us what has happened to the traditional hike

to school that helped to build young bodies. The television set, the movies and the myriad conveniences and distractions of modern life all lure our young people away from the strenuous physical activity that is the basis of fitness in youth and in later life."

Given the concern of both Eisenhower and Kennedy about modern society's impacts on the American physique, one can hardly help wondering what they might have thought of the Information Age. There are, to date, scarce scientific data to correlate the explosion of information technology with the further expansion of America's waistlines, but the observational evidence is profound. An increasing number of our citizens make their living seated in front of computer workstations, and only one in five of us engages in a high level of physical activity at work or at leisure. Almost two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. The chronic diseases most often associated with obesity – heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes – kill 1.7 million Americans every year, accounting for two-thirds of all deaths.

Virtually all the nation's health-related agencies and organizations address fitness today not in terms of a common external enemy, but as a public health crisis that can be traced to the specific details of our daily lives.

As a result, the focus of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) has shifted from the "minimum muscular fitness" of schoolchildren in the 1950s to the overall health, quality of life, and longevity of Americans of all ages and abilities. Through its programs, initiatives, and partnerships with other agencies and private organizations and foundations, the Council is positioned to challenge the growing problem of physical inactivity on all fronts, from the



motivations of individuals to the broader social aspects of physical activity in the United States today.

### The President's Challenge

In a sense, the Council's flagship program, the President's Challenge, serves as a 50-year history lesson on the nation's attitudes and available science regarding physical fitness. What began as a national youth fitness assessment has grown into a series of programs that encourage healthier lifestyles for Americans aged 6 to over 100, for people with and without disabilities. As Christine Spain, the Council's director of Research, Planning, and Special Projects, points out, "The changes have gone on throughout the history of the program. It isn't a stagnant program."

In 1966, the Presidential Physical Fitness Award (PPFA) was first offered to American youth aged 10 to 17 who demonstrated outstanding physical achievement. In 1987 - 88, the National Physical Fitness Award (NPPFA) was added to reward kids who achieved a basic but less-challenging level of fitness, and in 1991, the Participant Physical Fitness Award (PA) was established to acknowledge the efforts of students who attempted all five events in the President's Challenge but did not meet the standards for either the Presidential or National Awards.

These early changes to the fitness awards program - which had the effect of making it more inclusive - were made based on national surveys of American youth. Because the last national survey - a study of 19,200 students - was conducted in 1985, says Spain, "We actually make changes [today] based on the science." For example, after the Surgeon General's landmark report, "Physical Activity and Health" was released in 1996 and revealed the health benefits of regular, moderate physical activity, the Health Fitness Award was created to recognize the achievement of healthy fitness based on a set of standards that included body composition - commonly defined as body mass index (BMI), a ratio of fat to lean body mass.

The Council that was appointed by President George W. Bush saw much to admire in these awards programs, but also believed it could do more to encourage lifelong physical activity for all Americans. "That fitness test is a great program, but it's a one-day program," says John Burke, a Council member and president of Trek Bicycle Corporation. Burke is President George W. Bush's second term Council

chair. "If you take a look at the purpose of the President's Council, it's to get Americans active. There's a huge activity crisis in the United States. I thought we needed to ... address all Americans and come up with a product that people can use to encourage lifelong physical activity."

In an effort to encourage the habit of a healthy, active lifestyle in addition to meeting individual benchmarks, a task force in 2001 created the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) to acknowledge kids and adults who are active for 30 to 60 minutes a day, five days a week, for a period of six weeks. By earning the PALA, participants become more likely to establish - and more important, maintain - an active and healthy lifestyle, and thereby become less likely to suffer from injuries or chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.

The current science of fitness and exercise physiology identifies four components of physical fitness, each of which can be measured: body composition; aerobic capacity (the ability of the heart and lungs to supply the muscles with oxy-



gen); muscular strength (the amount of force that can be exerted by a muscle) and muscular endurance (the ability of muscles to move for a long period of time); and flexibility (the ability to move muscles and joints through their full range of motion). To include a variety of these measures, the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards program offers three distinct ways for people to earn awards for being fit, healthy, and active:





### 1) Be active five days a week for six weeks.

The newest award in the President's Challenge Program, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award, is open to anyone, regardless of skill level or level of fitness. The goal of the program is to help participants begin an active lifestyle that will continue throughout their lives.

For kids aged 6 to 17, the PALA is awarded to those who are moderately or vigorously active for 60 minutes a day for six weeks, at least five days a week. If a participant would rather measure activity in terms of steps taken in a day, he or she can alternatively use a pedometer. Boys must take a minimum of 13,000 steps a day, and girls must take 11,000.

For adults 18 and older, the PALA is available to those who are active for 30 minutes a day, five days a week for six weeks, or to those who log a minimum of 10,000 steps a day.

There are a couple of additional PALA stipulations: The activity logged by participants (log forms can be downloaded from the program Web site, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)) must be done in amounts of at least 5 minutes. While research has shown that the best health benefits accrue from at least 10-minute time blocks of activity, 5-minute blocks were chosen in accordance with the program's goal of encouraging physical activity. There are almost 100 different activities (also viewable on the Web site for those seeking ideas) available to participants, from figure skating to shuffleboard to mountain climbing, lawn mowing, and cross country skiing.

The Council chose a six-week period because it was thought to be a good start toward encouraging participants to become lifelong exercisers. Because, like many things in the lives of post-industrial Americans, the program may be disrupted by unforeseen events, and because the Council does not want anyone to give up after nearing their goal, a two-week "buffer" has been added into the calculation: Participants are given a total of eight weeks in which to accumulate their six weeks of activity.

For those who are already physically active and want to challenge themselves to achieve an even higher level of fitness, there is the Presidential Champions Award. In a sense, the Presidential Champions program is an enhanced version of the popular Presidential Sports Award – an individual achievement-based program, offered from 1972 to 2002, which

encouraged anyone over 6 years old to participate regularly in sports activities. That program was administered by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), a long-standing Council partner. The Sports Award emphasized specific sport-related standards; the Presidential Champions program, while challenging, is more in tune with the Council's goal of encouraging both active lifestyles and physical fitness.

"The Presidential Sports Award had criteria and you had to do only that activity," Spain explains. "So if it was skiing, nothing else I did to condition myself, no other activity counted. And of course nobody does just one activity. The Presidential Champions [program] counts all activities of daily living."

The Champions Program uses the same list of appropriate activities as the PALA, but is based on a point system: Participants earn points based on time and intensity. To encourage participants to stay active every day – rather than to burn up as much energy as possible in a few marathon bouts of activity – there is a daily cap of 750 points. Participants can earn the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Champions award based on the number of points they accumulate.

### 2) Score high on physical fitness tests.

The basics of the Presidential Physical Fitness Award haven't changed much over the years, and the program remains a popular method for school-aged kids to evaluate their fitness against a specific set of standards. The program involves five physical assessments, each of which measures a particular aspect of fitness:

- curl-ups or partial curl-ups (abdominal strength/endurance);
- one mile run/walk (heart/lung endurance);
- pull-ups or right-angle push-ups (upper body strength/endurance);
- shuttle run (leg strength/power/agility) and just plain fun; and
- V-sit & reach or sit & reach (lower back/hamstring flexibility).

Kids who score in the top 15 percent of their age group on all five items are eligible to receive the award for outstanding achievement – a round blue badge embroidered with an eagle. Those who exceed the 50th percentile on all the test items, but don't achieve the 85th percentile on one or more, qualify for the National Physical Fitness Award – a round red badge embroidered with an eagle. Those who





## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness

complete the President's Challenge but don't meet the 50th percentile on all elements earn the Participant Physical Fitness Award – a round white badge embroidered with an eagle.

3) **Achieve health standards for fitness tests.** The Health Fitness Award – a gray badge with an embroidered eagle – can be earned if participants score within a healthy range and includes a body fat measurement, or body mass index (BMI). The following criteria make up the Health Fitness Award:

- partial curl-ups;
- one-mile run/walk, or another distance option that is age-appropriate;
- V-sit and reach, or sit and reach;
- right-angle push-ups, or pull-ups; and
- body mass index (BMI).

In keeping with the expansive, inclusive standpoint of its highest-profile program, the Council has made the President's Challenge program available to participants with



*Presidential Physical Fitness Awards recipients.*





# The Presidential Champions Program



The Presidential Champions Program is for adults who are active more than 30 minutes a day/5 days per week (or more than 60 minutes a day for youth under 18). There's even a special track for athletes and others who train at more advanced levels. You can only join the Presidential Champions Program online at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). This is your life... be a champion.



Log on, sign up, and score!

### 1. Choose an activity.

Select activities that you enjoy and make you feel good. For example, you could go running, walk the dog, or participate in martial arts. You can take the Challenge by yourself, or together with friends and family.

### 2. Get active.

Your goal is to see how many points you can earn by being active. You'll earn points for every activity you log. Points are based on the amount of energy each activity burns. So the more active you are, the more points you'll get.

### 3. Track your activity.

Our online activity log makes it easy for you to track the time you spend on activities. You can log your time as often as you want, in amounts as short as 5 minutes. You can go back up to 14 days to enter past activities.

### 4. Earn your award.

The Presidential Champions Program recognizes your accomplishments with special awards. The first goal to aim for is a Bronze award. Then you can keep going for a Silver, and Gold. For those seeking a new challenge, keep logging your activity and work your way toward the Platinum! Visit the Web site for details on this award level.

You'll find all the program details — including how many points are needed for each award level — online at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). The only thing left to do is to log on and sign up.

9

THE CHALLENGE

disabilities or special needs, who as students have the right to an individualized physical fitness program. The Council passionately believes that anyone, regardless of ability level, can be motivated to develop a lifelong habit of physical activity. President's Challenge awards are available to anyone whose qualifying standards have been appropriately adapted to fit their individual abilities, and in the spirit of flexibility, it does not specify a set of modified standards. Rather, the Council offers guidelines to teachers and community fitness leaders who determine that a student needs accommodations in one or more test categories or awards.

Participants who are unsure about what constitutes a V-sit or about which activities are counted toward participation in the PALA now have at their disposal a new resource: the President's Challenge interactive Web site, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). Here, participants can find everything they want to know about the program, including the reasoning behind the amounts and types of activities chosen by the Council. They can also download publications and activity logs; order awards, apparel, pedometers, or teaching aids; and even use an online BMI calculator.

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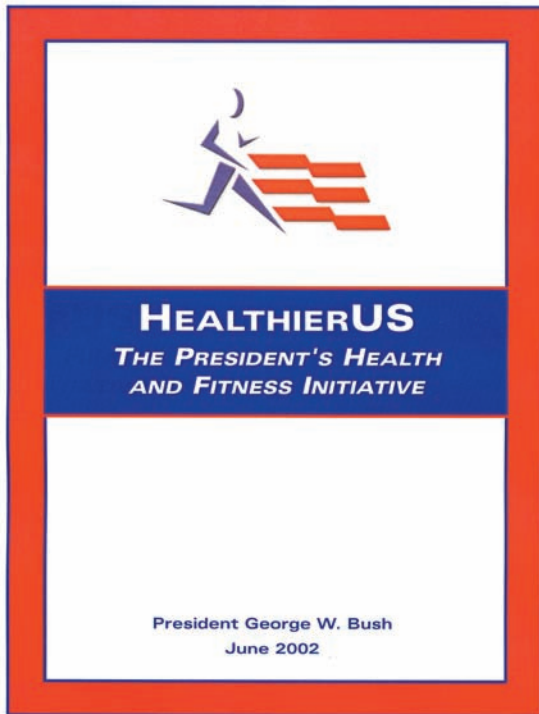


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Outsiders might note with curiosity that the program's domain name ends with ".org" rather than ".gov." This is for the simple reason that the President's Challenge is a rarity among federal initiatives: It has always been a self-sustaining enterprise that does not receive any federal funds, but instead draws on the surplus generated by the sale of awards. The Web site; the Council's online quarterly publication, *Physical Activity and Fitness Research Digest*; and other Council resources are all maintained essentially cost-free out of the proceeds from the 4.2 million awards sold each year at modest prices – around 75 cents for an embroidered emblem and \$6 for a Presidential Champions medallion.

### HealthierUS

The new look of the President's Challenge is in itself the result of another key presidential effort to take on the emerging challenges to the nation's health: the HealthierUS initiative, launched by President Bush in June of 2002. "Basically everything we do," says Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President's Council, "falls under the HealthierUS initiative."

HealthierUS, an effort that spans the executive branch, was prompted by the overwhelming accumulation of research – much of it funded by the federal government – suggesting that for most Americans, the improvement of overall health, and thus the prevention of disease and premature death, is as easy as making small adjustments and improvements in daily activities. The program's main objective is to use the resources of government to alert Americans to the

vital health benefits of these simple and modest changes in physical activity, nutrition, and behavior.

The program identifies four keys for a healthier America:

- being physically active every day;
- eating a nutritious diet;
- getting preventive screenings; and
- making healthy choices – i.e., avoiding alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

When he kicked off the HealthierUS initiative, President Bush also introduced the members of his President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The president selected 20 outstanding volunteer citizens, including distinguished athletes and healthcare experts, to serve on the Council.

Along with refocusing the President's Challenge program and the Council's main informational Web site, [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov), the new Council was tasked with coordinating activities with federal, state, and private organizations to serve American communities more effectively. The president also issued an Executive Order directing certain agencies to review policies, programs, and regulations related to the goals of HealthierUS, and to subsequently make recommendations to the president for further promoting personal fitness.

The president's directives to his new Council were quick to bear fruit. The President's Challenge has been transformed into a program more in tune with the fitness needs of all Americans, and in [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), it has its own companion Web site for participants. Similarly, the Council's official government Web site, [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov), has been remodeled as an informational gateway for a broader segment of interested parties. Users can access information related to physical activity and health from agencies of HHS and other federal departments, as well as educational resources from nonprofit health and fitness organizations. The site also features a quarterly newsletter and a "Popular Topics" feature related to physical activity and healthy living, as well as current physical activity news.

The Council and other federal agencies also came up with their own set of recommendations specific to government resources, on which President Bush promptly took action. Because an important objective of HealthierUS is to encourage families to enjoy the outdoors together and to make exercise fun and achievable, the White House emphasized the use of public lands and water for developing fitness. In addition to declaring a fee-free weekend in all the nation's national parks and federal lands, the administration drew attention to the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), an implementation of the Park Service's conservation and outdoor recreation mission. Through RTCA, Park Service staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies in the conservation of rivers, preservation of open space, and development of trails and greenways for recreational use.

The Council and its parent agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, have also acted upon the president's call to join forces with their allies at all levels of





government, as well as the private sector. At the federal level, two interagency task forces have established written agreements to work together. "One is the Healthier Children MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)," explains Johnson, "among HHS, USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture], and the U.S. Department of Education. We're all working together to look at how we can improve the health and wellness of children." The second concerns Recreation, and involves HHS, the U.S. Department of the Interior, USDA – which includes the Forest Service – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Transportation. "We're trying to make the connection between public lands, or nature-based activity, and public health," says Johnson. By getting out the message that the nation's public resources are a valuable resource for physical activity, from hiking and biking to hunting, fishing, and water sports, the Council and its partners are attempting to leverage the nation's resources to improve America's health.

The effort also involves private organizations. National Trails Day, staged by the American Hiking Society in June, helps to promote the abundance of available trails across the United States. The government also has a partnership with SnowSports Industries America (SIA), which hosts Winter Trails Day every January. "We work with SIA in offering free snowshoe clinics, which we've done twice at Liberty Mountain, Pa. [2004, 2006], and once at Wintergreen in Virginia [2005]," says Johnson.

In addition to these outreach programs, the Council works with more than 80 President's Challenge Advocates and partners to promote its trademark program, the President's Challenge. One of the keys to the Council's success, says Johnson, is its awareness of the need to work on all levels of American society, from the federal government down to the grass roots, from corporate America to the nation's hospitals and schools. It's no exaggeration to say that the health of a growing number of Americans has reached a critical level of risk for chronic disease and death, and the Council is helping lead the way in an unprecedented public health outreach. "We really know that if we're going to make a dent and move forward," says Johnson, "we need to all work together in collaboration."

### Healthy People 2010

The federal government has long appreciated the limitations of its power and resources to directly affect a problem as widespread and complex as the recent surge in physical inactivity and obesity. A collaborative initiative such as HealthierUS is, in a sense, a mature expression of this realization. In order to take maximum advantage of its partners' collective power, the Council has also been involved in an initiative that has, for almost three decades, worked to collect data about the nation's health trends and get this information into the hands of others with the potential to effect change. Healthy People 2010, this program's most recent incarnation, is a set of health objectives for the nation to achieve over the first decade of the 21st century. With its supporting

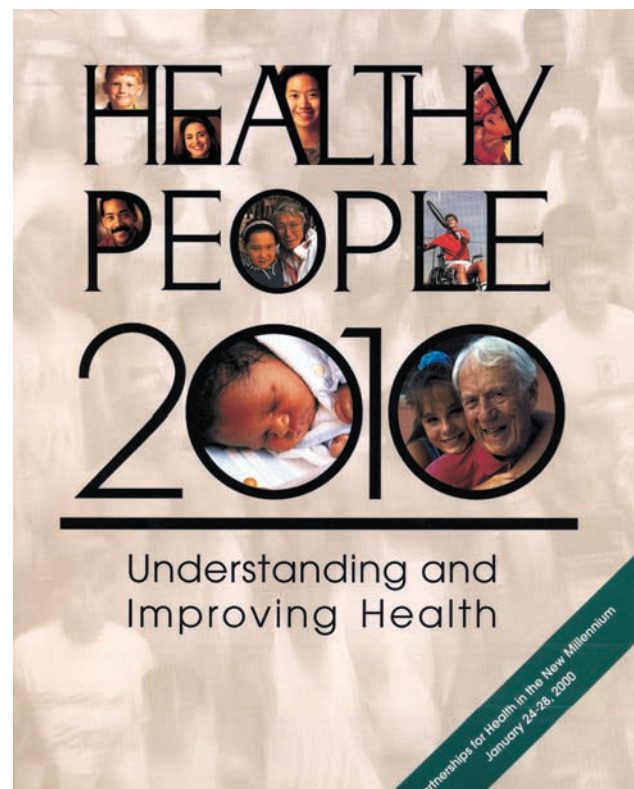
data, Healthy People 2010 is intended to be a template that can be used and adapted by state governments, communities, professional organizations, and others to develop programs for improving health.

Like its predecessors, Healthy People 2010 was developed through a collaborative process that brought the nation's best scientific knowledge to bear on the issue of physical activity and fitness in the United States, and was designed to measure progress toward concrete goals over 10 years. Its rock-solid credibility is the result of this rigorous development – a process that involved an alliance of more than 350 national membership organizations and 250 state health, mental health, substance abuse, and environmental agencies – as well as more than 11,000 public comments on the program's draft objectives.

Healthy People 2010 is designed to increase the quality and years of healthy life for Americans, eliminating health disparities among different segments of the population. The program's model for state and international disease prevention and health promotion programs covers 28 focus areas and 467 specific objectives.

The PCPFS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are the co-lead agencies responsible for the objectives and data for one of the 28 focus areas: Physical Activity and Fitness (focus area 22). Together, they have developed a single overarching goal: to improve the health, fitness, and quality of life for all Americans through physical activity.

The data that have helped the Council and the CDC develop their set of sub-objectives have been gathered





through the CDC's behavioral risk factors surveillance system (BRFSS), a state-based data repository. These data have revealed overwhelming disparities among the nation's different population groups regarding physical activity. The proportion reporting no leisure-time physical activity is higher among women than men; higher among African-Americans and Latinos than whites; higher among older adults than younger adults; and higher among

the less affluent than the more affluent. These differences indicate significant barriers to Healthy People's overall goal of improving health and fitness through daily physical activity.

BRFSS data have also demonstrated a major decrease in vigorous physical activity among American teens during grades 9-12. The decline has been more profound for girls than for boys, whether the measure is engaging in vigorous physical activity in general or in team sports, and an important factor seems to have been a dramatic decrease in mandatory physical education programs at the nation's middle schools and high schools.

Based on these data, the Council and the CDC have made a series of recommendations for reducing the disparities in physical activity among Americans, and for reversing the decline in physical activity among teens - especially girls. "What we hope," says Spain, "is for people to get engaged. PE has been dropped in schools and our children are getting heavier ... [Healthy People 2010] is definitely an ideal tool for states, for organizations to use as a base because

the statistics are sound and scientific."

As 2005 drew to a close, Healthy People 2010 was in the midst of finalizing its mid-course review, a process by which all objectives are pinned to an identifiable data source. "There's still a lot of information that's coming out about why people engage in physical activity," says Jane Wargo, a program analyst with the Council. "What makes people more apt to be active or not is a gray area. But there are still a lot of things that science has shown can contribute to whether a person is active." By using evidence-based recommendations about the social aspects of physical activity, the Council and the CDC hope to guide state and local governments, school districts, and private organizations and foundations toward making the small changes - access to facilities for disabled people and other minority groups, or changes in school scheduling, for example - that will combine to make Americans healthier and more fit.

**May Month**

The scientific and anecdotal data driving the programs and initiatives of the PCPFS may paint a grim picture for

PCPFS photo by Joey King

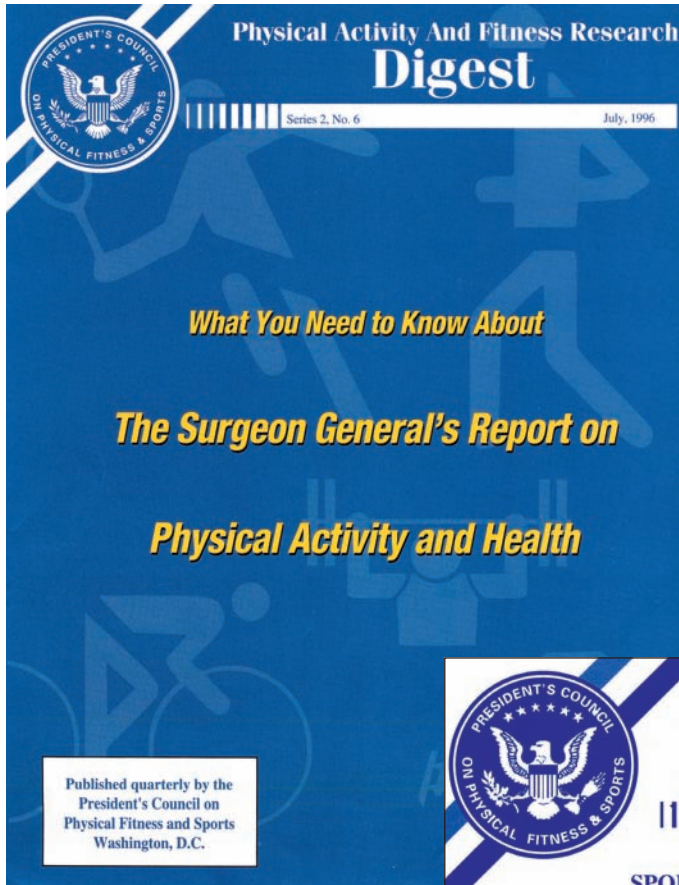


*Left: Kids with USDA's "Power Panther" at the 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival. Below: Recipients of the Presidential Physical Fitness Award.*



PCPFS photo





many Americans, but the members of the Council haven't forgotten why they became involved in sports and fitness in the first place: to have fun. For more than 20 years, the Council has taken the lead in the country's most prominent celebration of the joy and benefits of an active lifestyle: National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, also known as "May Month."

May Month is now a high-profile promotion that involves partners around the country. While the Council serves as an information clearinghouse during May Month, providing materials and recommendations to communities and organizations that want to increase physical activity, fitness, and health among their constituencies, Spain points out that much of the work on the ground has been taken on by its partners. "We rely on organizations throughout the country to actually do the grassroots implementation," she says. "For example, the National Association for Health

and Fitness includes many state and governors' councils that have activities, such as Employee Health and Fitness Day. They're going to be promoting that throughout all states. The first week of May is National Physical Education Week, so all the education associations throughout the U.S., both on the state and local level, are going to be promoting the benefits and necessity of physical education. Swimming Week is the last week in May. So it's not just going to be our celebration. We are really going to give prominence and visibility to all who have celebratory days and weeks throughout the country during the month of May."

### PCPFS Research Digest

Of all the gradual changes the Council has undergone in the last half-century, the most obvious is probably its transformation into a government agency whose activities are guided by the very best and most current scientific research. In 1993, Spain, as the Council's director of Research, Planning, and Special



#### Abstract

For more than a century, the contention that sport builds character has been popular among educators. The more cautious perspective of researchers is that sport might build character, but only under the right conditions. In this paper, the authors report on three aspects of character that may be influenced by sport participation: perspective-taking and empathy; moral reasoning; and motivational orientation. In each area, research-based recommendations are offered for coaches and others in sport leadership positions.

#### Introduction

The idea that competitive sports provide effective means for promoting character has been around for a long time, at least since the Ancient Greeks. In modern history, the British boarding schools of the nineteenth century gave new impetus to this theme. Believing that muscles and morals develop simultaneously through involvement in team sports, these schools' administrators encouraged or required their students to participate in competitive athletics. The idea soon crossed the Atlantic and became popular in U.S. schools and culture. *Sport builds character* became a popular cultural saying providing the rationale for including sport programs in a wide range of educational institutions. Even today's highly commercialized big-time collegiate sport programs are often justified by appeal to the idea that these programs contribute educational value to the athletes by nurturing positive character traits. Opponents of sports, on the other

hand, often cite an abundance of anecdotal evidence of sport-related cheating, aggression, self-aggrandizement, disrespectful behavior, and corruption to suggest that sports have the opposite effect—they undermine positive character.

In this paper we summarize what is known about sports and character. While there are large gaps in our knowledge, a few evidence-based conclusions seem warranted. These conclusions point to a middle position between proponents and opponents of the idea that sports build character. At this point, it is clear that the early optimism regarding the character-building power of sports was overstated or unfounded. Participation in sports does not have any automatic beneficial effects on character. On the other hand, it seems equally evident that sports are powerful social experiences that may, *under the right circumstances*, have positive benefits. If sports are to have a positive impact on the character development of participants, the leadership and behavior of the coach is key. Consequently, in this paper we also offer recommendations for those involved in coaching or sport leadership. First, however, we must clarify what is meant by *character*.

#### What is Character?

The word *character* has gone in and out of vogue in the psychological literature. It was a popular term early in the twentieth century. At that time, it was thought that a person had character to the extent that they possessed a set of virtues or moral personality traits like honesty, integrity, generosity, and trustworthiness. By mid-century, however, the word had fallen into disfavor and was rarely used. The primary reason for its rejection by psychologists was that human behavior, according to the dominant theories of the time, was determined less by the individual than by the environment. In a classic series

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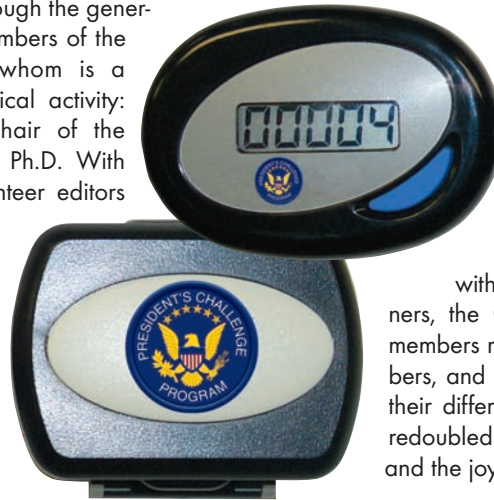


Projects, jumped at the chance to revive one of the Council's best tools for getting information to physical activity professionals and the general public: the PCPFS *Research Digest*, a quarterly publication that synthesizes scientific knowledge about topics related to physical activity, fitness, and exercise science. Most important to Spain, *Research Digest* is provided free of charge to anyone who wants to read it. Until 2001, it was both an online and a print publication, but now, since it is funded solely through the revenues of the President's Challenge program, it is offered via e-mail or for viewing at [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov) and [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org).

Spain was helped in her venture through the generous assistance of two pioneers and members of the Council's Science Board, each of whom is a renowned expert in the field of physical activity: Charles Corbin, Ph.D., the former chair of the Science Board, and Robert Pangrazi, Ph.D. With Corbin and Pangrazi as the first volunteer editors and then later Don Franks, Ph.D., they were able to attract articles from leaders in the field, who contribute them pro bono. "Basically it is bringing the best and latest information that appears in scientific journals, written in language so that non-professionals and the general public can have access to this information. The purpose

is to offer the information not only to scientists, but also to teachers, physicians, college professors, and the public."

A role for the Council as a clearinghouse for cutting-edge scientific research is probably not one that was envisioned by President Eisenhower when he created the organization 50 years ago, but much has changed in the last half-century. As the first president to take concrete action toward improving the physical fitness of the nation's youth, Eisenhower would probably have been disheartened by the knowledge that 50 years later, 60 percent of all Americans - the generation originally tested by Hans Kraus - would be either overweight or obese. But in the people and the programs of the 21st-century PCPFS, he would also have found good reasons to be hopeful. Self-sustaining, armed with the best science, flexible enough to adapt its programs to a rapidly changing American society, and joining forces with an ever-broadening alliance of partners, the Council itself is in good shape. Its members refuse to be discouraged by the numbers, and instead - judging from the scope of their different programs and initiatives - have redoubled their efforts to bring health, fitness, and the joy of active living to all Americans.



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# VISIONARY AMERICANS PROMOTE A HEALTHIER, ACTIVE NATION

**These Role Models Are Health and Fitness Heroes Who Show How Individuals, Organizations, and Businesses Can Promote a Culture of Active Living**

 *By John Harney*

**T**hroughout the history of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS), individual citizens as well as organizations and businesses have rallied to the call for an active America. This article spotlights a few examples of visionary individuals and organizations helping Americans of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities achieve a healthy, active lifestyle.

## **Physical Activity and Fitness for All**

When he's not helping Lance Armstrong find the perfect racing bicycle, Trek Bicycle President John Burke is working hard for the PCPFS to promote a new way for Americans to be active and fit. A member of President George W. Bush's Council since 2002 and appointed chairman in 2006, Burke has spearheaded and pushed the move to transform



the Council's well-recognized school program to test the fitness of school-children into a 21st century Web-based tool to help all Americans get active today and stay healthy and fit for life.

"I saw that we were spending the majority of our time reaching kids one day a year with a test," said Burke. "I thought we could leverage the President's Council to do a whole lot more. Our major job is not to test people on their fitness but to help them get active now and stay active for life."

The President's Challenge program originated in 1966 as a fitness test designed by experts to be used one day a year by schools to measure students' fitness. Burke is responsible for spearheading and pushing the overall development and design of [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), a 21st century, Web-based physical activity program for all Americans. He encouraged the Council to expand the age range of the program to appeal not only to children and teens but also to adults and seniors, and to develop a Web-based tool useable by anyone at any physical activity and fitness level.

"We wanted to offer more than a mandate for fitness," Burke said. "We wanted to give Americans a tool that would allow them to start being active now and stay active for the rest of their lives."

For people who have not been active but want to develop a habit of regular physical activity in a relatively short time, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) is an ideal way to get started.

According to Burke, "The theory behind the PALA is to create a habit by motivating people to exercise 30 minutes a day, five days a week for six weeks (60 minutes a day for youth aged 6-17)."

For Americans who are already active and want to increase their levels, the President's Challenge offers the



Presidential Champions feature of [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). This program is entirely Web-based and allots points to participants according to how much energy they burn as they work toward bronze, silver, or gold medals.

The Web site computes points for more than 100 physical activities and provides a tool for monitoring daily performance and progress over time. Activities listed range from mainstream sports such as softball to exercise regimens like aerobics to more on-the-edge endeavors like wind surfing. Even activities such as housework and gardening count - anything that gets you moving at least 30 minutes (60 minutes for youth), five days a week for six weeks

out of an eight-week period.

The President's Challenge offers a group feature that allows a group to assign an administrator who tracks participants' progress compared to others in the group. There's also a sign-up option for individuals who want to join an existing group. Groups are an especially nice alternative because, according to most experts, people tend to stick with physical activities that involve social interaction with others.

The President's Challenge program





is free except for the purchase of optional awards, such as patches, certificates, lapel pins, and medals.

To get started, log on to [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) and click on the age group that suits you, then on the following page choose a regular (Presidential Active Lifestyle) or advanced (Presidential Champions) program. After reviewing the rules for participating, sign up for the program by creating a basic profile of the activities preferred, along with your height and weight, age, e-mail address, mailing address, etc. In addition to using the Web site to log your progress, you can measure your BMI (body mass index), a formula that tells you if and by how much you're overweight. You can also compare yourself to others in your state and age group, and you can sign up for free fitness-related newsletters.

Logging your activities could not be simpler. On the appropriate page that the day's date appears, just enter your activity and length of time you performed it, and the record appears at the bottom of the page. As the days and weeks pass by, messages and symbols on the page tell you how many days you've worked out each week and how many months into the program you are. Once you've finished your six weeks, use the forms provided to apply for an award if you earned one.

According to Burke, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) is being adopted not only by schools, but also corporations and community centers around the country as the backbone of their fitness programs. This is exactly what he intended. "I think the best thing about this program," he says, "is that it can touch just about everybody - the regular person as well as the guy training for the Ironman."

### Health and Fitness for Older Americans

**Fifty-Plus.** Many fitness experts now believe that an obese 40-year-old might be in worse shape than a fit 70-year-old. One of the most vocal of these proponents is Dr. Walter Bortz, clinical associate professor of medicine, Stanford Medical School, and chairman of the board at Fifty-Plus Lifelong Fitness ([50plus.org](http://50plus.org)), an organization that promotes fitness for Americans over 50 years old. He has not only written five books on fitness-related subjects like diabetes, but he has also run a marathon every year for the last 35 years. Bortz may be an anomaly, but he's living proof that exercise offsets the detrimental effects of aging.

That fact "has nothing to do with genes or accidents - it simply has to do with how well we maintain our substance," he explains. He compares the factors affecting the condition of the human body to those affecting that of a car. "A car's condition depends on design, maintenance, accidents, and how old it is - but maintenance is the big deal, and you can do something about it," he claims.

Bortz contends that exercise "is good for everything - not just the body [arteries, bones, sex lives, etc.] - but also for your psychology [depression, etc.]" He attributes this to a phenomenon known as "energetics." He says energetics posits that exercise turns on all components of the body and

### U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (USOC)

The U.S. Olympic Committee is the custodian of the Olympic Movement in the United States and is dedicated to providing opportunities for American athletes of all ages. Its principal mission is to support U.S. Olympic and Paralympic athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence and preserve the Olympic ideal, and thereby inspire all Americans. According to its Congressional Charter, it has the additional responsibility of promoting and encouraging physical fitness and public participation in amateur athletic activities, a function that it is proud to undertake in collaboration with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.



brain right down to the level of the genes. He compares this activation to electricity turned on in a house. Without exercise, you're walking around in a dark, semi-functioning structure - your unfit body. Exercise "turns on all the switches," he says, which means gene function is vastly improved because what's known as "gene expression" ("the translation of information encoded in a gene into protein or RNA," according to [medterms.com](http://medterms.com)) is improved. This results in more antibodies to fight disease and high blood pressure and contributes to the optimization of key fitness factors like bone and muscle mass.

The fitness of people who follow his regimen seems to bear out his beliefs. For instance, he maintains that members of the Fifty-Plus Fitness Ambassadors Program (who primarily run and walk) have "mortality and disability rates that are only 30 percent of the national average." What's more, he says, "we have no more arthritis than inactive people." This is a critical finding because traditional arthritis treatment involved resting the joints. Bortz believes the opposite. You use it or lose it - exercise keeps the joints limber.

In his book on diabetes, he even goes so far as to espouse exercise as almost a replacement for, not an adjunct to, insulin therapy. "When one is fit," he explains, "the insulin binding sites, which are little pores on the surface of the muscle, are open, so fitness without insulin facilitates glucose

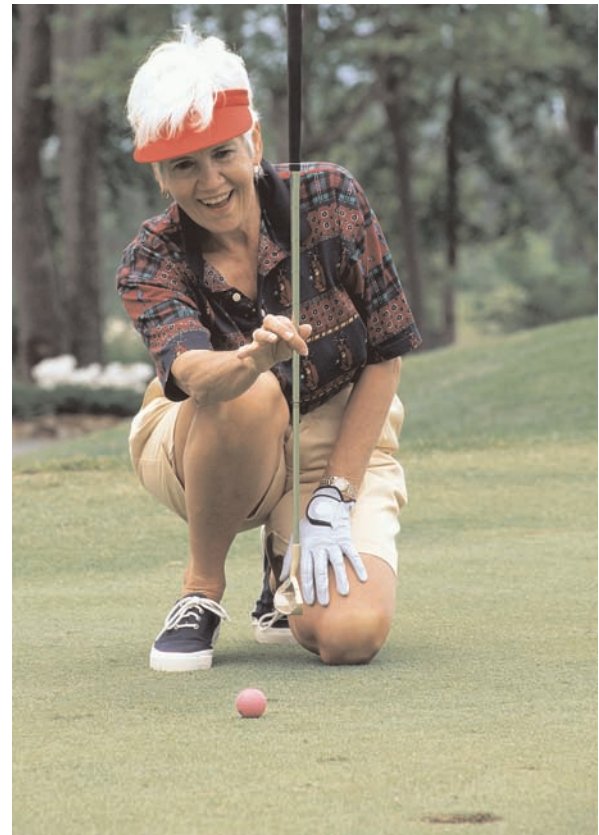


transport. When you're inactive," he continues, "those pores clog up and sugar does not enter so easily." Bortz says he's done studies with dogs that appear to prove his point. When he removed dogs' pancreases, they got no insulin at all, and even when he gave them glucose, they couldn't use it. By contrast, he says, "if you exercise them, they use the sugar just as though they had a pancreas." Energetics, he concludes, is the reason.

The way Bortz spreads the word is through the Fifty-Plus program, which encourages volunteers to join the group and popularize its agenda in different cities. Fifty-Plus members have group runs, walks, discussion groups, and continually monitor their fitness activity (how many miles each walks/runs per year, etc.) and key health indicators (blood pressure, etc.). Fifty-Plus also sponsors the annual Senior Games, where seniors amicably compete in sports like basketball, biking, and softball.

Bortz may be an exemplary case of fitness in older Americans, but it would not hurt those in his age demographic to follow his lead. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Americans 65 and older are the fastest-growing segment of the population, having grown from 3 million in 1900 to over 33 million now. Bortz's key concern is whether they will become an asset or a liability to the rest of the nation. Fitness is a key way to keep them happy - out of nursing homes - and productive - not a drain on the economy or their families.

**AARP.** The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is the best-known service and advocacy group for older Americans, and elder fitness is one of its priorities. According to



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## STAR POWER!

As chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in the administration of President George H.W. Bush, Arnold Schwarzenegger brought an unprecedented level of public recognition and popular awareness to the Council. "Arnold" (as everyone called the chairman) used his celebrity to give maximum exposure to the Council's health and fitness messages. On his own initiative and at his own expense while chairman of the Council, Schwarzenegger traveled to all 50 states to advocate personally to governors the need for daily, quality physical education in American schools. During his tenure as chairman, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month became a nationally televised celebration, as Schwarzenegger joined the President and Mrs. Bush at "Great American Workouts" on the White House lawn.



Margaret Hawkins, AARP's manager of Health Promotion, the organization promotes several walking programs that have garnered great feedback from its members.

The basic one is 10 weeks long, she says, and involves wearing pedometers (step-counting devices) that AARP provides to measure members' daily activity. The goal is to increase their activity by 10 to 20 percent a week until they're averaging 9,000 to 12,000 steps a day, or roughly five miles. To do so, she adds, almost invariably means incorporating a 30-minute walk into their routines. "People tend to overestimate how active they are," she explains, "and this gives people an idea of their activity, but also they can see how by incorporating some more movements in the day - parking further away in the parking lot and taking the stairs - that steps begin to mount up and it's very motivating."

Two other 10-week programs involve virtual components. In the first, members virtually walk the Lewis and Clark Trail or the Alaska Highway - in essence, entering the miles walked per day onto the AARP Web site, which then plots how far they've traveled along a digital map of each route. In the second, Get Fit on Route 66, they convert minutes devoted to any exercise to miles walked along the legendary route. Maps for the routes contain information about the

areas they walk through, exercise tips, recipes, and other incentives. AARP will even send out motivational e-mails to remind members when to exercise.

AARP is targeting what Hawkins calls the "triers and planners" who know they should exercise and know the benefits, but have trouble getting started and doing it safely." AARP also offers fitness videos and books and information on fitness activities like gardening, martial arts, and dancing.

Both Fifty-Plus and AARP incorporate the President's Challenge PALA tool into their exercise programs.

### **Able Is as Able Does: Kirk Bauer**

For a role model of active living through sports, PCPFS-appointed member Kirk Bauer is as far as anyone needs to look. Bauer is a skier who has run two marathons and hiked the Grand Canyon twice and, with his son, has scaled four 14,000-foot mountains - all since his 50th birthday. He loves to swim, water ski, and golf. His favorite sport today is bicycling. He has done all of this with one leg. An above-the-knee amputee, he uses a special "clip" system and steel-toed shoe to cycle. At age 57, he can do 40 to 60 miles a day with no problem.



## THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE

Throughout the distinguished history of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), which dates to 1885, this visionary organization has provided guidance and training to professionals in physical education, sports, recreation and, later, dance. As AAHPER (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation), the organization was closely associated with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in its earliest days as the President's Council on Youth Fitness. When he established the Council in 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower also created a citizen's advisory committee on the fitness of Americans to provide technical expertise in youth fitness. AAHPER remained a valued contributor to the Council over the years. After a national fitness survey was administered to young people aged 10-17 in 1965, AAHPER developed the National Youth Fitness Test ("AAHPER Test"), based on the survey results, and administered the Council's school fitness testing program from its inception in 1966 as the Presidential Physical Fitness Award, until 1988, when the program became known as the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program.

Today AAHPERD is an alliance of five national associations and six district associations ([www.aahperd.org](http://www.aahperd.org)). AAHPERD provides its members with comprehensive and coordinated resources, support, and programs to help practitioners improve skills and further the health and well-being of the American public. AAHPERD's member organizations are the American Association for Health Education (AAHE); the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE); the National Dance Association (NDA); the American Association for Physical Activity and Recreation (AAPAR); the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS); and the Research Consortium.

A Vietnam veteran who earned two Bronze Stars, Bauer lost his leg to a hand grenade explosion in Vietnam. He endured seven operations. Many people would have put in for benefits, gone home, and rocked on the porch. That's not his style. Instead, Bauer joined

Disabled Sports USA ([dsusa.org](http://dsusa.org)), a fitness organization founded by World War II disabled veterans, continued by Vietnam vets, and now active with veterans disabled in the war on terrorism, under treatment at Walter Reed Hospital in Maryland.



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**Kirk Bauer, appointed to the PCPFS in 2006, helps people with disabilities stay active and fit through sports. Bauer, an above-the-knee amputee, is pictured here at the 2005 Hartford Ski Spectacular, an event of Disabled Sports USA, where Bauer is executive director.**

Disabled Sports USA "absolutely turned my life around and showed me what was possible – what I could still do," Bauer says. In return, he devoted much of his time to the program and in 1982 became the organization's executive director.

What Disabled Sports USA helps Bauer and other disabled veterans do is pretty incredible. It serves vets with permanent physical disabilities like amputations, spinal cord injuries, and blindness through 86 community-based chapters operating in 35 states

offering 20 different sports programs in largely individual sports activities like water and snow skiing, cycling, rowing, kayaking – even rock climbing and scuba diving. It also provides much of the special sports equipment and training needed free of charge. Last year it served about 60,000 vets.

While it offers both unusual sports like scuba and some team sports, most members prefer simpler activities for individuals like cycling or skiing because they cost less and are easier to pick up. However complicated the

sport, though, Bauer contends that "we can teach someone the basics in one day." That translates to immediate and ongoing success – a wonderful motivational strategy.

Matching variously disabled vets with the right sport requires different degrees of ingenuity. For instance, to bike or kayak the blind simply use tandem bikes or boats and let a sighted partner take the front seat and steer. But what does a paraplegic do? "There are hand cycles if you have no use of your legs," Bauer says. These are three-wheelers vets use their hands to cycle that have up to 21 speeds to make arm-cycling more doable on hills. Kayaking is still possible if a vet has a spinal cord injury that prevents him from supporting his trunk – "You use a special seat in the kayak that gives you back support, but you can still paddle," explains Bauer.

Water skiing? Bauer says vets use devices known as Kam Skis and Boom Bars. For paraplegics, for instance, the single Kam Ski has a special platform and wide base that lets them perform the same maneuvers as able-bodied skiers – slaloms, wake-jumping, you name it.

Golf? Bauer says there are "one-person golf carts that have swing-out seats, so if you have no use of your legs you can use them." There's even a new bionic leg designed to bear weight with the knee bent that allows amputees a fuller, more powerful swing. Bauer says, it "can be programmed to weight-bear at a certain angle of knee bend [with most mechanical legs you have to be straight-legged to weight-bear on them]. You program it for your golf angle and hit the toe of your shoe three times," he continues, "and that will program it automatically."

Outrigger canoeing? Not a problem. You simply lash two hulls together to accommodate an eight-man crew and pretty much any disabled vet can be on the team. Bauer keeps it simple – "If you have someone who can see and someone with two arms, you can have a team."

Disabled Sports USA is also a big fan of the president's awards program,



particularly the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA). "With some other standard tests," Bauer explains, "the guidelines leave out people with disabilities." The PALA is based on the time you put into almost any physical activity, so Bauer applauds it because it "can be used by a broad range of those who are 'differently-abled.'"

### "Kicking" and "Slamming" in the Inner City

In 1994, Julie Kennedy was a public school teacher in southeast Washington, D.C., and a part-time Starbucks barista. After noticing how little her students had to do after school in that rather impoverished neighborhood, Kennedy brought in a soccer ball one day and taught her students to play after school. They loved it and kept on playing. On a rainy afternoon, Kennedy brought them inside the school, where teacher and students read poetry together. The kids were so enthusiastic, they began to write poetry. Kennedy convinced her fellow baristas to contribute tips to the effort. With a few more balls and books but no budget, she expanded the program to several school districts in Southeast D.C.

Word of her success got out to Paul Caccamo (then an independent fitness consultant). In 1999, Caccamo launched what is now "America SCORES" in 12 other cities, including Seattle and Chicago.

Kennedy was so committed to the program that she convinced her secondary employer, Starbucks, to sponsor it – eventually to the tune of \$250,000 a year. Later Verizon matched that amount. Now about 10 corporate sponsors such as Computer Associates contribute \$50,000 a year or more.

According to Marilyn Bayona, national communications director, America SCORES now operates five days a week – two days of soccer practice, two of writing, and one day of soccer scrimmages with other schools – mostly for kids 8 to 12 years old, though three cities offer middle school programs for children up to 14. At the start of fall, there's a Fall Frenzy soccer tournament; at the end of fall there's a Poetry Slam. Kids play at the first and dance, act, and recite at the second – and win prizes for the best poems. So in September, "Gooooal" resounds across playgrounds in poor neighborhoods, while in December, lines as lovely as "when lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed" might issue from the mouths of first-graders.

This is no mean achievement since inner-city public schoolchildren most often fail to meet the national standards for reading and writing – largely because their schools lack the resources to sufficiently teach them.

America SCORES mandates that participating children get in eight hours of activity a week. In exchange, it gives them free cleats, shirts, fields, and transportation. The program hires inner city public school educators as writing and soccer coaches. Gatorade donates energy bars and drinks.

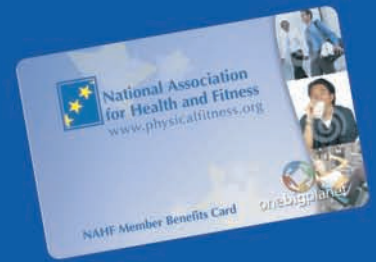
But, bottom line, the program is about results. Bayona says boards of directors in each city worked with Philliber Research Associates to measure kids' improvements in academics and found that, in Seattle, for instance, reading and writing scores have gone up dramatically. Needless to say, the kids are also more fit. "In San Francisco," says Bayona, "they found a reduction in BMI for fat in children after only eight weeks in the program."

America SCORES has credibility in the celebrity community, too. Verizon spokesman James Earl Jones read poetry with the kids in three cities, and author Amy Tan, rapper Kanye West, and professional soccer stars like Mia Hamm and Freddy Adu have all contributed to the organization's biannual magazine. Today, the unique 13-city program linking soccer and writing into a health and educational curriculum benefits about 4,000 inner-city kids.

### General Mills Foundation

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### 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to the President's Council on its 50th anniversary from the National Association for Health & Fitness.





Challenge, General Mills Foundation is improving the health and fitness of about 100,000 kids. Since its inception in 2002, the alliance has awarded \$6 million in grants to worthy fitness initiatives for K-12 children around the country. Kirstie Foster, manager, Corporate Public Relations at General Mills, says the program is called GM Champions for Healthy Kids and awards 50 grants for \$10,000 each to community groups and schools to have programs that promote nutrition and fitness for kids. It also provides PALA kits so kids can track their activity and receive PALA awards.

The foundation has also partnered with the Mayo Clinic to create an online health and fitness program for its own employees. One of its components, called 10/10, provides menus, nutritionists, and fitness trainers to employees who choose to lose 10 pounds in 10 weeks. General Mills has been especially successful at helping traveling employees eat right and work out while they're on the road. Foster says,



Photo courtesy of America SCORES

**America SCORES, founded in Washington, D.C., is now making a difference in children's lives across the country with its focus on sports and reading and writing.**

### YMCA

The YMCA is the largest nonprofit organization in the country with a mission dedicated to health and wellness. With more than 2,500 YMCAs and 20.1 million members, YMCAs touch the lives of many people and have the potential to reach even more. Given the magnitude of the obesity epidemic in this country and the physical footprint of YMCAs in communities across the country, YMCA of the USA (the national resource office for YMCAs around the country) launched YMCA Activate America,<sup>™</sup> a long-term public health initiative of the YMCA movement to help combat this health crisis by promoting and supporting healthier living for millions of Americans. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports has been a strong supporter and partner in this national initiative. For more information on YMCA Activate America, log onto [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net).



**Lynn Swann (PCPFS chairman, 2002-2005) helps YMCA youth sign up to take the President's Challenge on [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), at the Lakewest Family YMCA in Dallas, Texas, on July 18, 2003, when the interactive Web site was launched.**

"we did a 20-year study [in which we took] sales employees' health assessments 20 years ago, and those who are still with the company we evaluated again this year and found that these employees are actually healthier now than they were 20 years ago."

Among those who've taken notice, both *Fortune* and *Working Mother* magazines have repeatedly cited General Mills as a great place to work in large part because of its fitness and health programs.

One of those local heroes who has leveraged General Mills' largesse to make a difference in his community is Jason Langheier, founder of the Fitness Forward Foundation in Durham, N.C. He used General Mills funds to launch the Coach K Drive 2 Fitness program for 21,000 K-8 kids in local schools. Participants earn points for limiting video game and television time, being physically active, eating fruits and vegetables, and getting enough sleep. In turn, they earn awards like free karate lessons and roller skating passes and – the big ticket prize – entry to the Duke University basketball banquet.

Photo courtesy of YMCA of the USA



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## VISIONARY LEADERS

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Michael O. Leavitt  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
2005 - present



*"We wait for people to get sick and then we spend top dollar to make them healthy again. My top priority ... in one word: prevention."*



Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona,  
M.D., F.A.C.S.  
Surgeon General of the United States  
2002 - Present

*"Physical activity is not an all or nothing proposition ... small steps toward a more physically active life yield significant health benefits."*

Tommy G. Thompson  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
2001-2005



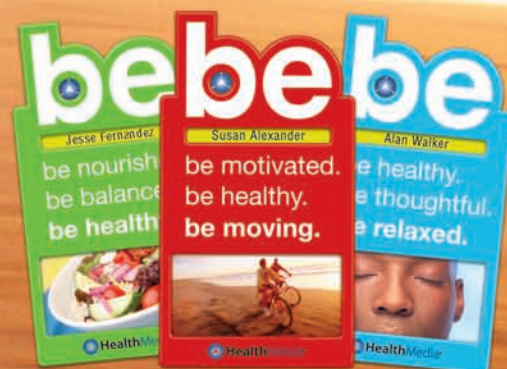
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## FITNESS VISIONARIES

### Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., M.P.H.

"The father of aerobics"

Leader of the international physical fitness movement and credited with motivating millions of people to exercise in pursuit of good health, Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., M.P.H., published his first bestseller, *Aerobics*, in 1968, introducing a new word and a new health concept to America. By emphasizing the relationship between cardiovascular fitness and health/longevity, he has motivated millions of previously sedentary people to begin a program of regular physical activity and exercise. He is founder and president of the Cooper Aerobics Center, in Dallas, Texas.

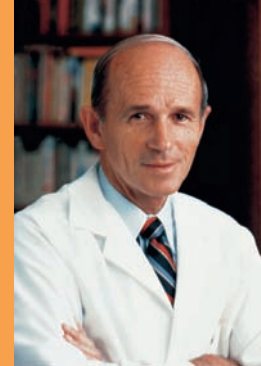


Photo courtesy of Cooper Aerobics



Photo courtesy of Elaine LaLanne

### Jack LaLanne

Revered as the "Godfather of Fitness" and regarded by many health and fitness professionals as the grandfather of their movement, Jack LaLanne opened the first modern health club in 1936, in Oakland, Calif., when he was only 21. When television was in its infancy, he brought exercise and his "fitness to feel better" message to Americans who tuned in to *The Jack LaLanne Show*, which first aired in 1951. Mr. LaLanne, who turned 91 on Sept. 26, 2005, continues to practice what he preaches. He works out for almost two hours each day at the gym and in the swimming pool.

### Hans Kraus, M.D., and Bonnie Prudden

Visionaries with a mission and a passion for health and fitness, Hans Kraus, M.D., and Bonnie Prudden published the "report that shocked the president." In articles that appeared in the *New York State Journal of Medicine* (with Prudden writing under the name Ruth P. Hirschland) and in the *Journal of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation* (December 1953), Kraus and Prudden alerted the nation to the results of a study showing that American youth were less fit than their European counterparts. Convinced of the link between physical fitness and overall health and well-being, Kraus and Prudden gained national media attention for their work throughout the 1950s. Their findings "alarmed" and "shocked" President Dwight D. Eisenhower and caused him to make youth physical fitness a national priority. The result was the creation of the President's Council on Youth Fitness, later renamed the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.



Photo courtesy of Joan Dameron

Photo courtesy of Susan B. Schwartz



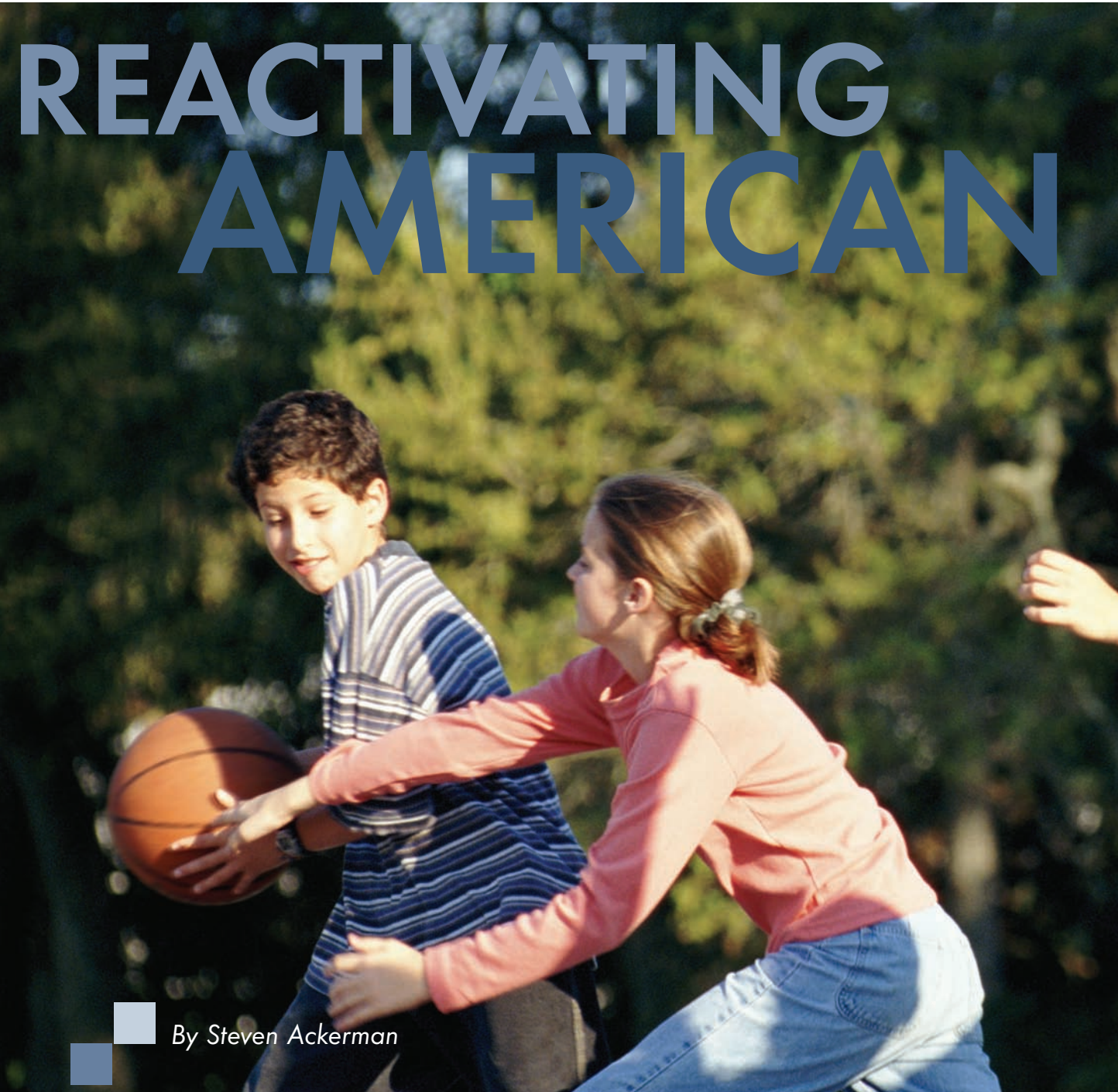
Photo courtesy of Jazzercise

### Judi Sheppard Missett

Judi Sheppard Missett founded the Jazzercise fitness program in a Chicago dance studio in 1969. As president and CEO of Jazzercise, Inc., Missett oversees 6,300 franchised instructors in 30 countries. The cutting-edge program continues to break new ground in the fitness industry through innovative class formats – a fusion of jazz dance, strength training, Pilates, yoga, kickboxing, and flexibility movements. Through community service programs and events, Jazzercise has raised \$26 million for various charities. Missett has been inducted into the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and Enterprising Women Halls of Fame. She received the Club Industry Fitness Business Pro's Lifetime Achievement Award and the IDEA Health & Fitness Association's Lifetime Achievement Award and is consistently ranked as a leading franchise in *Entrepreneur* magazine's Franchise 500.



# REACTIVATING AMERICAN



By Steven Ackerman

National Association for Sports and Physical Education photo

**A**t the end of its first 50 years, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) faces a challenge more daunting than the one it confronted when the Council was first established as the President's Council on Youth Fitness in 1956. At that time, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had learned of a report showing that European children were more fit than American kids. Alarmed, the pres-

ident declared a mandate to shape up the nation's youth. The launch of the first manned spacecraft (*Sputnik*) by the Soviet Union accelerated the drive to keep the United States competitive, as parents, teachers, coaches, and youth organizations united to respond to the president's call for fitter young Americans.

In those days, many children walked or biked to school, and parents felt secure enough to let their kids play outdoors





unsupervised. After school, on weekends, and during summers, children romped around schoolyards and city playgrounds and parks; they were free to roam their own neighborhoods, to climb trees, play tag, and ride bikes. The fast-food industry was still in its infancy and hadn't yet found a place on school lunch menus. Soda machines hadn't appeared in school hallways and lunchrooms. A bottle of pop was a treat reserved for Saturday matinees and con-

tained only about 8 ounces. There were no malls with food courts to entice young people to fill up on unhealthy meals and snacks.

Physical education in school back then usually involved sports participation and military-like physical training – calisthenics, sit-ups, and running laps. When the President's Physical Fitness test became a regular part of some school PE programs in the 1960s, earning the coveted blue presidential



patch was something only the best performers could hope to attain. Few people at that time objected to a competitive testing program that rewarded only the best performers and left unfit kids feeling left out on the sidelines. After all, competition was the American way. There may have been a few chubby kids who suffered teasing and humiliation at being the last ones chosen for the team, but no one back then guessed that they were the shape of things to come.

### Mixed Messages

Today, American children live in an environment that works against their health. Social changes have contributed toward less-active lifestyles both in and out of school. The simple act of walking to and from school has become unusual. The growth of far-flung suburbs, often unequipped with sidewalks, has made the automobile a necessity for children to get to classes, sports, or extracurricular activities. Fear of Amber Alert abductions is another deterrent. Leisurely walking enclosed shopping malls does not constitute enough healthy physical activity for young people. Physical activity is literally being squeezed out of our children's lives.

In today's message-driven culture, there is a steady drumbeat of mixed messages. In December 2005, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study indicating that a third of teen-agers and 14 percent of young adults are out of shape. The result translates into 7.5 million adolescents so unfit as to risk serious health consequences. Studies have shown that fully 16 percent of our schoolchildren are overweight. The numbers are even worse among poor and minority groups, including some immigrant populations that scarcely existed in the United States in 1956.

On Jan. 9, 2006, *The New York Times* initiated a series

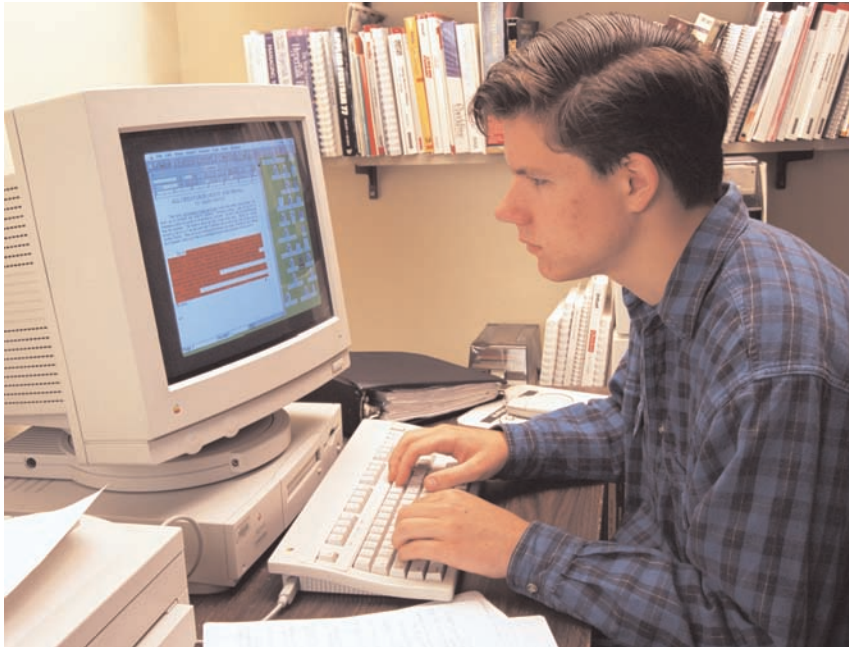
of articles reporting epidemic onsets of diabetes in New York City, attributed among young people to poor diet and sedentary lifestyles. Researchers in Rhode Island reported on the detrimental health effects of sleep deprivation upon overbooked high school students. School officials in Salem, Mass., canceled recess to buy more time for students to prepare for mandatory standardized academic performance tests. While all these reports came from the Northeast, they mirrored developments nationwide.

At the same time that media articles and health reports remind us almost daily that we are cultivating a generation of unhealthy children who are overweight and at risk for chronic disease, kids are being bombarded with commercials on TV and cable stations enticing them to eat fatty, sugary, salty foods from breakfast through dinner. Slumped on the couch, they see slender film stars and buff athletes on television, offering unrealistic standards of beauty and performance. "What's the use if I can't look that good or play that well?" a young person thinks, reaching for the bowl of chips on the coffee table.

But appearance is the least of the problems faced by overweight youth. High blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol, once diseases of aging, are now diagnosed in children as young as 8. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, juvenile overweight and obesity are increasing at an alarming rate. To address the enormity of the epidemic, the academy urges that change is desperately needed in opportunities for physical activity in childcare centers, schools, after-school programs, and other community centers.

America's pediatricians have observed that the probability of childhood obesity persisting into adulthood, 20 percent at 4 years of age, increases to 80 percent by adolescence,





alarming trends, though earnest, remains unfocused. Despite the efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to highlight the grave threat posed by childhood overweight and obesity and the efforts of the media to spread this message, there has yet to be a nationwide response at the grassroots level comparable to the groundswell that followed President Eisenhower's call for a coordinated youth fitness initiative in the 1950s and President Kennedy's national campaign for a fit nation in the 1960s.

### Educating the Schools

The obvious place to reach young people is in school, where they are, in effect, a captive audience. A mixed message is the presence of vending machines in schools and the prevalence of calorie-dense fried food selections in school cafeterias. Sale of sugar-laden sodas and sweet and salty snacks became a favored way to fund equipment and uniforms for school athletics.

Today, Illinois alone requires daily PE in school, unfortunately without full local compliance. To a degree, PE requirements were casualties of a "no-frills," "back to basics" movement in the 1970s. Tales of high school athletes - indeed, college athletic scholarship recipients - who were unable to read bred a reaction. Team sports and physical education began to be regarded as "frills" distracting students from academic studies. Moreover, mandates intended to broaden school athletic participation to students previously underserved - including women and physically challenged individuals - had the unintended consequence of leading many cost-conscious school systems to drop entire programs rather than pay to expand them. The time demands of



driving healthcare costs to "staggering" levels. The United States surgeon general has predicted that preventable disease and death associated with obesity may exceed the risks of cigarette smoking in the not-too-distant future.

Even though everyone knows - or should know by now - that sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy eating have put America's youth at risk, the national will to reverse these

preparing for standardized academic tests further stressed schools, crowding out physical education. Somewhere in the mix, American education lost the classic concept of "a healthy mind in a healthy body."

Yet evidence showed that athletes tended to rank among the best students academically. A fresh effort to address this paradox was launched on Dec. 14, 2005, when the

Photo by Sandra O'Claire



National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) received an initial grant from USA Football to kick off a three-year national research project on the relation of athletics and academics, focusing on high-school participation, but with implications for schools generally. "High school sports are as American as apple pie," says NASBE Executive Director Brenda Wellburn, but "there has never been a comprehensive and national examination of student participation, the relationship between academic performance and athletic involvement, and the role of coaches in inter-scholastic competition." The effort is to initiate an open-ended "national conversation" based for the first time on scientific data.

USA Football is a nonprofit creation of the National Football League and the NFL Players Association dedicated to promoting amateur football, now involving 12.7 million Americans, including 4.5 million kids. Former congressman, Cabinet officer, and Buffalo Bills quarterback Jack Kemp presented the study with a first grant of \$44,307, recalling the formative role his own coaches had played when he was a student. The study expects to ask better questions rather than seek simple answers, Kemp suggests. Other backers include the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHHA). For the President's Council, the promise of a better-informed dialogue opens a prospect of restoring physical activity and fitness, including athletics, from the status of frills to full features of education at every level.

Citing his own experience, Kemp points out that coaches spend more time one-on-one with students than anyone else in their lives, exerting tremendous influence that can carry over into discipline and healthy lifestyles in adults.

All students aren't star athletes, of course. The initiative includes kids involved in intramurals. In 1989, New Jersey physical education teacher Len Saunders sought to motivate his students by getting one school in each state to exercise at the same time on a specific day in May. He called it ACES: American Children Exercising Simultaneously. His experiment was so successful that ACES now stands for All Children Exercise Simultaneously, for it now involves children in over 50 countries. A key to this worldwide acceptance is its noncompetitive emphasis on participation. The event calls on kids to walk, jog, bike, dance, do aerobics, or perform a combination of these and other activities.

A more formal endeavor to enlist schools to fight epidemic inactivity among overweight, undernourished, and sedentary students emerged from the first Healthy Schools Summit, convened in 2002 under the auspices of First Lady Laura Bush and former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher. Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) now boasts initiatives in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, relaying the results of their very diverse activities in a "What's Working" database (<http://actionforhealthykids.org>).

To help the maximum number of children by improving their school environments, the Action campaign pursues three major thrusts:

- Improving children's eating habits by increased access

to nutritious foods and beverages throughout the school campus, while integrating nutrition education into the curriculum;

- Increasing children's physical activity through physical education courses, recess, and after-class extracurriculars;
- Educating administrators, teachers, students, and parents about the impacts of nutrition and physical activity on academic achievement.

A Web site has been developed to teach third- to sixth-graders how "Energy in" (good nutrition) makes for "Energy out" (physical activity). "ReCharge!/Action for Healthy Kids" can be found at [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org).

Another effort to regain lost ground in school fitness emerged in 2005 from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), made possible by a \$300,000 grant from Cargill, Inc. and in partnership with the American School Health Association. Public and private schools in the 39 states where Cargill operates can qualify for mini-grants generally

### DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT?

Without regular physical activity, a child's physical development suffers. Physical activity helps decrease body fat in overweight children, improves cardiovascular fitness and bone health, and fosters self-esteem and social skill development. Active children are more alert and may be more energized and ready to learn than inactive children. When schools do not provide opportunities for regular physical activity during the school day, children often fail to get the minimum amount of physical activity needed for good health: 60 minutes a day of activity on five or more days a week. School-based physical activity programs have been shown to be the most effective way to assure that kids are getting enough activity to be healthy. Yet only one state, Illinois, mandates daily physical education from grades K-12. The California Department of Education studied the relationships between academic achievement test scores among fifth, seventh, and ninth graders and their scores on a physical fitness test (FITNESSGRAM) and published the results in 2005. Although results suggested a positive relationship between the measures, it is too soon to conclude that the children who performed better on the academic achievement tests did so because they were more fit. Other factors, such as socioeconomic status, living conditions, and social or family support may have influenced the results. Evidence also suggests that time spent in physical education class does not take away from academic performance. In other words, a child who spends an extra hour in the classroom to work on academic subjects will not necessarily perform better academically in school than if the child were to participate in a physical education class during that same hour.





## CHEERLEADING NOT JUST POM-POMS ANYMORE

By Steven G. Wedge, President & CEO of Cheerleaders of America



ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with none exceeding \$10,000, to support physical or nutrition activities. These follow action plans developed through the CDC's School Health Index: A Self Assessment and Planning Guide (SHI).

To read SHI is to survey all the obstacles – and all the possibilities – educators face in achieving optimum health and safety for their students. The motivation is the promise of increasing students' capacities to learn, reducing absenteeism, and improving physical fitness along with mental alertness. Individual schools identify the strengths and weaknesses of their programs, then devise strategies for improvement.

Further help for schools comes from the largely adult-oriented American Council on Exercise (ACE), which provides to educators at no cost its ACE Youth Fitness Curriculum. The seven-lesson module is targeted to fourth- and fifth-grade teachers and explains the dangers of being overweight and the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

School districts got a prod to respond to these and other efforts when Congress passed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, which mandated that they establish "wellness policies" – guidelines for school nutrition and physical activity – by the beginning of the 2006 school year. To assist the hard-pressed school districts in meeting the impending requirement, AFHK has created a comprehensive, Web-based Wellness Policy Tool available through its Web site. Yet nobody imagines that the goal will be easy to achieve.

In 1997, the Council published "Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Girls," a partnership with the University of Minnesota Center for Research on Girls and Women In Sport, facilitated by PCPFS Council member Deborah Slaner Larkin. It noted that almost half of young Americans aged 12 to 21 were not active on a regular basis, with 14 percent completely inactive. Young females were twice as likely to be inactive as young males.

By July 2005, the need to reverse these dangerous trends among girls had not been met, according to a study conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) tracking 1,213 black and 1,166 white girls

When organized cheerleading debuted in 1898 during a college football game at the University of Minnesota, who could have imagined the growth of this popular activity over the last 100-plus years? Cheerleading in the United States is the fastest growing athletic activity for children ages 5-18, boasting over 4.1 million participants, and has grown an amazing 18 percent just between 1990 and 2002. To put the growth in perspective, since 1998, cheerleading has grown faster than football, soccer, basketball, and field hockey, according to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association. In addition, cheerleading is a competitive athletic discipline in 43 nations.

With this phenomenal growth comes the possibility of more injuries, and today's media has not wasted time jumping on the sensationalistic bandwagon of positioning cheerleading as dangerous. All athletic activities have inherent risks, but cheerleading is no more dangerous than any other athletic endeavor. Furthermore, there are several strategies coaches, participants, and administrators can take to minimize the risks.

First of all, schools, all-star gyms, and recreation leagues must hire qualified coaches. No more can Sally's mom be the coach just because she's Sally's mom. Second, coaches must engage in certification classes that prove their level of expertise and show they are continually learning new coaching methods and skill techniques. Many professions require a minimum level of continuing education in order for persons to remain current and/or certified. Cheerleading coaches should be held to the same standard. Currently, coaches can continue their education by attending a Cheerleaders of America ([www.coacheeranddance.com](http://www.coacheeranddance.com)) summer camp or coaches' conference. Coaches can also be certified by the National Council for Spirit Safety and Education (NCSSE – [www.spiritsafety.com](http://www.spiritsafety.com)). Finally, coaches must teach cheerleaders proper skill techniques, progressions, and good safety habits.

To this end, cheerleading coaches must continue to educate themselves in order to promote safety, health, sportsmanship, and teamwork to their cheerleading athletes.



from ages 9 or 10 to ages 18 or 19. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) concluded that a decline in physical activity plays a key role in weight gain among adolescent girls. "Total calorie intake increased only slightly and was not associated with the weight gains," NHLBI reported.

"These new results show that a previously reported steep decline in physical activity among adolescent girls is directly associated with increased fatness and an increase of body mass index (BMI), a measure of body weight adjusted for height." NHLBI Director Elizabeth G. Nagel, M.D., lamented that "many girls are at a literal standstill when it comes to exercise and physical activity in their pre-teen and teen years."

Part of NHLBI's answer to this continuing decline is We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition), a program encouraging families to eat healthy, exercise more, and reduce leisure screen time. Initially, We Can! health lessons are integrated into 35 community health programs around the country. It's a small step, but it's a start.

The prospect that the coming generation may be the first to be less healthy and long-lived than their parents gives Melissa Johnson a sense of urgency. Johnson is the executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the current name of the youth fitness council founded by President Eisenhower, now a part of HHS.

"We need to get to kids no later than the third and fourth grades," observes Johnson. "If they get interested in health and fitness by age 9, they're likely to develop good habits they will carry through life." Johnson thinks a holistic approach is the best strategy for the 21st century – a coordinated effort by communities working with all levels of government, parents, educators, coaches, youth- and faith-based organizations, park and recreation facilities, sports organizations, medicine, and business.

Johnson is seeking out relationships with partners to work together to reverse the dangerous trends that loom

#### WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents have the most influence on the physical activity levels of their children and on the amount of physical activity opportunities offered. The most important way a parent can help is to be a role model. Children with active parents are more likely to be active. To help children be active, parents should be cognizant of how much physical activity their children are getting on a daily basis. To ensure that children have an environment that encourages as much activity as possible, parents can help children identify activities of interest and help overcome obstacles to participating in these activities. This may involve registering children for classes or sports teams, arranging for transportation to practices, and providing the right equipment. Most important is for parents to be active with their children, to make family time active time whenever possible.



ahead if the nation does not address childhood overweight, obesity, and inactivity. One of the Council's most estimable allies, the General Mills Foundation, has recognized the need to pursue youth health in two ways, expanding beyond the schools and emphasizing nutrition alongside physical activity, reflecting new approaches. In launching its youth initiatives in 2002, "we were looking for partners with national reputations and recognition," says the Foundation's Ellen Luger. "We found them in the President's Council and the American Dietetic Association."

The commitment started with the General Mills Challenge Schools, seeking to involve low socio-economic schools commonly enrolling inner-city minorities that are most vulnerable to unhealthy trends. In time, the Foundation supplemented the concept by instituting Champions Youth Nutrition and Fitness Grants available to community groups as well as schools. This is a major effort, awarding \$10,000 grants to support 50 innovative programs nationwide. So far, 120,000 children have benefited from the Champions grants. The grassroots ingenuity is impressive among the 2005 grantees. For instance:

- In Chicago, Children's Memorial Hospital's "Healthy Teens" allows 450 low-income minority kids to have personal clinical attention from physicians, social workers, and registered dietitians. They follow up their Healthy Lifestyle Assessments with an array of athletic, nutrition, and even cooking lessons.

- At Tully Accelerated Elementary Magnet School in Tucson, Ariz., 500 5-to-12 year-olds learn nutrition literally from the ground up through "Jardinera Para Su Salud" ("Gardening for Your Health"), raising vegetables and learning to prepare them.

- Kids Café, sponsored by the Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Commission on Economic Development, serves 1,200 kids aged 5 to 14 healthy meals year-round, teaching them how to prepare those meals while encouraging them to increase levels of physical activity.

- Rise, Dine and Swim of LaPorte County Leadership, Inc., LaPorte, Ind., couples healthy eating lessons with enjoyable swims and physical activities.

While many are based in the schools, most of the Champions programs are based instead in community organizations. Meanwhile, other programs aim to reach kids as individuals, many by means of the Internet. Such traditional organizations as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and





police athletic clubs continue effective promotion of youth fitness. The Boys and Girls Clubs of America, sponsored by the Coca-Cola Company and Kraft Foods, Inc., has an innovative program called Triple Play: A Game Plan for the Mind, Body and Soul, which empowers children to make informed decisions about their own well-being.

Another President's Council creative partner is Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey, which offers schools its program CircusFit™, fun circus-style activities appealing to second- to fifth-graders ([www.CircusFit.com](http://www.CircusFit.com)). Celebrating their own 80th anniversary in 2006, the renowned Harlem Globetrotters will mark the President's Council's 50th anniversary by visiting 200 elementary schools during their 200-city tour, motivating kids to be active for at least an hour a day.

The President's Council has teamed with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the Kellogg Company to invigorate the cradle through the publication "Kids in Action: Fitness for Children, Birth to Age Five." Based on the premise that children love to move, the program seeks "to make meaningful activity part of children's lives." Even time-honored play like "This Little Piggy" is presented as a means of creating "body awareness in infants." The emphasis is to promote an active lifestyle in children from the start.

One of the first organizations to sign on as a PCPFS 50th Anniversary Partner was Alphabet Fitness, a holistic alphabet program directed at smaller kids, aged 2 through 8. It starts by introducing letters and numbers to children through playful workouts to get kids "hooked on literacy and fitness at the same time."

**An educational staff member and a child use the Alphabet Fitness program to form the letter W at the Boston Athletic Club. Alphabet Fitness, a PCPFS 50th Anniversary Partner, works to get children aged 2 to 8 interested in fitness and literacy.**



Photo courtesy of Alphabet Fitness

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 HHS OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH: Girl Power! [www.girlpower.gov](http://www.girlpower.gov)

**Moving Together**

No single approach can do the job of getting our kids moving. American society is more diverse and complex than it was a half century ago. As it recruited its 50th Anniversary Partners, the PCPFS responded in a way as holistic as its fitness philosophy, working to support varied approaches to a national health crisis. Its array of partners taking different paths to the same goal fosters a broad attack on a serious health crisis.

PCPFS cooperates with other entities within HHS, such as the CDC and the NIH, to disseminate authoritative and useful information about children's well-being. Through a federal interagency task force on healthy children, backed by two memoranda of understanding, it works with other government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Education toward a comprehensive national effort. States, school authorities, foundations, business and community groups, and even individuals are all attacking the health crisis in ways as varied as the country itself.

Melissa Johnson knows that moving the meter won't be easy. But she understands that the mission of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is more vital than ever. The crisis in youth fitness today is far more deadly than the threat posed by fitter Italian, Swiss, and Austrian kids back in the 1950s, which caused a president to issue a call for action to build a nation of fit and healthy children.



# REDEFINING SPORTS

FOR AMERICANS OF ALL  
AGES, BACKGROUNDS,  
AND ABILITIES

Today Everyone  
Can Experience  
the Joy of  
Movement

By Craig Collins





**W**hen Dorothy “Dot” Richardson was a young girl in the 1960s and early 1970s, she shared a frustration with many girls her age: She loved sports, but couldn’t find a girls’ team anywhere. “Before Title IX, when I was a little girl ... there were no girls’ teams,” says Richardson. “If you ever played it was because somehow a boys’ team let you. But they would never let a girl. My brothers got to play basketball, football, baseball, soccer, and I was always playing the pickup games.” Shortly after her father retired from the Air Force and moved the family to Florida, Richardson – then 10 years old – experienced what she thought was her big break. “A guy saw me playing catch with my brother before he went to play, and the coach asked me if I wanted to play on his Little League baseball team. And I was like: ‘Yeah! I’m going to get to live my dream of playing on a team.’ But then he said I’d have to cut my hair short, and he’d call me ‘Bob.’ I’d have to pretend I was a guy, and disguise myself as a boy.”

Richardson, reluctant to play baseball as a covert operative, walked over to another field where a women’s fast-pitch softball team was practicing. She had never heard of softball before, but after taking a few ground balls from the coach, she became the youngest member of the team. “So when I was 10,” she says, “softball discovered me.”

It was quite a discovery. Richardson went on to become a two-time Olympic gold medalist on the U.S. team, hitting the first home run in Olympic softball history at the 1996 Atlanta games – the first Olympic games to feature softball. Today she’s a physician (orthopedic surgeon) and medical director of the National Training Center in Clermont, Fla. – a facility for athletes of all ages and abilities.

“I’ve really been fortunate in my career,” says Richardson, “to taste what it was and live what it was before [Title IX], and see the transition to where it is now.” Today, she says, it’s hard for a girl to swing a bat without drawing the attention of an organized girls’ softball team, from church leagues to recreational leagues, from 8-and-under to 18-and-under, from middle-school varsity to international competition. An American girl will never again have to search as long or as relentlessly as Richardson to belong to a team.

It’s ironic that, at a time when organized sports are open to more girls as well as to more people of all ages and abilities than ever before, the number of people who participate seems to be on the decline. At the end of 2005, after the U.S. Census Bureau had released its Statistical Abstract, a 1,023-page compilation of demographic data and trends, many health writers seized on a pair of facts buried within the section on citizens’ recreational pursuits. While Americans’ participation in almost every recreational sport for which statistics were compiled, from bowling to golf to skiing, decreased in 2004, their attendance at professional sporting events increased, along with the amount of time spent viewing television. One of the most widely circulated articles on the report, released by the Associated Press, was titled “Americans Playing Less, Watching More.”

Sports sociologist Andrew Yiannakis, a professor at the University of Connecticut, thinks Americans’ adoration of the elite athlete deserves some of the blame for this trend: “In the U.S., we produce the best athletes in the world, in the midst of one of the most sedentary and unhealthy nations on Earth.” In America, says Yiannakis, “kids learn very early that performance is what matters, and not enjoyment ... not the intrinsic satisfaction of engaging in physical activity.”

If that’s true, it begs the question, “When do kids learn this?”

A 2004 community survey by North Carolina’s *The Charlotte Observer* and a local news station reported that three out of four children interviewed said that their main reason for playing sports was “to have fun.” These results seem to confirm a large-scale study conducted by the University of Michigan in the 1990s that asked more than 26,000 kids aged 10 to 18 why they played sports and asked them to rank order 10 reasons. The No. 1 reason reported was to have fun; the least important was to win.

Research also shows a dramatic drop-off in physical activity during grades 9 through 12, for reasons not yet fully understood. American adults have several factors working against them. They live in urban and suburban environments that seem to have been designed to discourage physical activity. Because of the way many people

**Dorothy A. “Dot” Richardson, Vice Chair, President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (G.W. Bush administration).**





now make their living, they spend a decreasing amount of time moving their bodies at work.

Richardson, by any measure an elite athlete, never dreamed of Olympic glory in a sport she hadn't even known existed when she was young. She played with her brothers for a different reason – the thrill. “I would always love to just run and climb trees,” she says. “Run after rabbits, or try to outrun a truck ... just catching a ball. The feeling. That’s – to me, that’s what it was about. It wasn’t getting a scholarship or being a professional athlete, or even winning a game. It was about – I felt I was given a gift, and when I used that gift ... I felt so alive.”

Richardson has devoted her career – as vice chair of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) and as a physician and trainer – to helping people of all ages and abilities understand an essential truth often forgotten amid the demanding pace of everyday American life: “Our bodies,” she says, “were created to move.”

Thanks to Richardson and others like her, there is good news for people who want to get moving, no matter what their age, skill, ability level, desire, or reluctance to compete. While most Americans remain largely inactive, many desire an active, healthy lifestyle and are discovering and promoting ways to get out and improve their lives and health. This trend recognizes physical activity for what it has always been: a joyful part of everyday life.

### ‘A Culture of Physical Activity’

Many Americans – especially those 40 and older – remember well the physical education classes of their school days, and for many, unfortunately, the memory isn’t a happy one. Francesca Zavacky, today a physical education teacher

at an inner-city elementary school in Charlottesville, Va., attended a small, rural high school in the late 1960s and early 1970s. “I went through physical education in the old-school fashion,” she says, “which was running through the old President’s Council physical fitness tests, and playing basketball most of the year, and doing a little bit of running in the spring, and that was pretty much it.”

While such a limited scope of activities was probably unusual even then, it is fair to say that a generation ago, physical education classes did not strive for the broad appeal sought by Zavacky and other teachers around the country. And that may be one reason why physical education – a near-universal experience for those of her generation – is becoming a rarity to all but a handful of American schoolchildren. Today, less than 7 percent of middle and junior high schools, and 6 percent of senior high schools, require daily physical activity for all students. This statistic is a grim indicator of how Americans’ neglect of physical activity has led the nation to an unprecedented level of poor physical fitness and overall health.

The physical education class of today bears only a slight resemblance to yesterday’s, according to Charlene Burgeson, executive director of the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE). Burgeson is among the professionals who earnestly hope that once Americans see what is happening in schools across the country, their attitude toward physical education will change. “A lot of adults think of physical education as traditional sports – you know, basketball, softball, those types of activities,” she says. “And those sports certainly are still included in physical education. But physical education is about developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be active for a lifetime. What one person enjoys as a physical activity is going to be different than others. We want students to understand the whole range of activities that are available to them and obtain the benefits of active living.”

For innovative practitioners of what is sometimes called the “New PE,” physical education is not about what you do in the gym for 50 minutes a day. It’s about what you do in the world for the rest of your life. For Zavacky and other teachers, this begins with a close look at opportunities and resources for physical activity in the local community. “If you go into a community to teach,” she says, “I think it’s your responsibility to see what’s available in the community for children outside of school hours. I used to teach in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. No one was using the three national parks that were available to them. No one was hiking. No one was doing any mountain biking or canoeing, all of the things that you would do in the outdoors that are right in your back yard.”

Before long her students were doing these things – along with orienteering and even learning survival skills such as building shelters and starting campfires. One of the highlights of her tenure in the valley, says Zavacky, was a ski trip, conducted during school hours, during which students were taught the basics and later received instruction on the health-related





aspects of the sport. "It was a really exciting opportunity for them," she says. "Once the students left our school, 20 percent of them went on to buy skis and continue skiing as a lifetime activity, where before no one even bothered to try it."

Most older Americans never imagined doing the kinds of things Zavacky and other physical education teachers have students doing around the country, often during school hours: surfing on the West Coast, cross-country skiing in the Upper Midwest, sailing in the Gulf of Mexico. For Zavacky, focusing on what her students enjoy has made her feel at once older and younger. "Suddenly I'm learning to roller blade; I'm mountain biking; we've just installed a climbing wall at our school. I'm learning how to climb and how to teach climbing in a really appropriate way to children so that they don't just learn how to climb, but they learn positive interdependence, how to work with others, respect their differences, share with them." Whatever Zavacky is doing, it's catching on: When the new climbing wall arrived, 45 kids showed up after school to try it out, and now some of the parents are coming in as well, both to climb and to watch.

Zavacky reflects with pride on how her students' lives have changed. They often stop her in the hallway to talk to

her about their time in the mile run, or their target heart rates, or the appearance of their abs. ("I don't think," says Zavacky, "that any of them knew what abs were before.") It's a dramatic reversal of what things were like when she first arrived. "There were a lot of kids who were afraid of physical activity and did not really have any self-efficacy in terms of physical activity, in terms of their personal physical skills," she says. "I really think that with children, how successful you are in other areas is really connected to how you do physically. And so when I came into this school, it was really a priority to create a culture of physical activity, so that kids would enjoy physical activity just to do it, just for the joy of movement."

### Sports for Americans with Disabilities

Forty years ago, no one imagined that a partial quadriplegic could traverse an intermediate ski slope or that amputees and paraplegics would be able to use a pulley system to climb sheer rock faces. Today the opportunities for the physically disabled to participate in sports are virtually limitless because of the availability of training and improved adapted equipment made of space-age metals and plastics. The biggest factor, however, is the more positive outlook of the people with disabilities themselves.

Mark Wellman, a climber who was paralyzed from the waist down after a 1982 climbing accident, has twice scaled the 3,000-foot face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. He has also skied the 50-mile distance up and over the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Wellman was a hardcore climber before his ascent, and he has repeatedly stated that he doesn't want people to get the wrong idea about his achievements. In a 1999 interview in *USA Today*, he said: "My message isn't for the disabled to come and climb El Capitan. It's to climb mountains that are barriers in their lives. And that can be anything."

For the disabled – many of whom have suffered injuries that left them depressed, alienated, and doubtful about their futures – that barrier is often a feeling of extreme pain and loss. "Convincing someone who has a spinal cord injury that they can go out and ski again, or bicycle or water ski, is very difficult, because the first thing they think about is injury," says Kirk Bauer, executive director of Disabled Sports USA. "We have to convince them that it's safe, that it's effective, and that they can do it. Many, many times, the programs, particularly for beginners, are provided free of charge, because they know they need to provide some incentive to keep them going. So all you have to do is show up. And once we get a person to the program, 95 percent of the time they are hooked, because they realize they can do it, they can do it well, they can enjoy it, and they can do it with their families. We hook them, and then they're gone, they're off and running. That happened to me. I waited six months before I got involved in sports and was really very skeptical about what I could do. When I finally went skiing, I intended to stay for one day and stayed four days. I was so excited that I couldn't leave; I see that all the time."

Army 1st Lt. (ret.) Steve Rice returned from the war in Iraq shortly after Christmas in 2003, after he was wounded by a roadside bomb in Baghdad. For a year, Rice tried to save a badly damaged leg, but after multiple surgeries, he decided to

### D.C. kids work out with military visitors at the 2005 HealthierUS Fitness Festival on the National Mall.



PCPFS photo by Joey King



undergo elective below-the-knee amputation in January 2005.

Rice is now a skier. "I was in Walter Reed [Army Medical Center] the first time I came home from overseas, and Kirk Bauer walked into my room with shorts on." Bauer told Rice he was putting together a ski trip in six weeks. He wanted Rice to come along. "I was just thinking to myself, 'Get the hell out of my room. Look at me! How the hell am I going to ski?' I went home for about a year. I fought with this leg and finally decided to have it amputated. When I woke up after the surgery and was lying in my room, Kirk came in again. He said, 'We're going skiing in six weeks, and I want you to be there.' And I said, 'Yeah. I'll be there.'"

In New Hampshire's Waterville Valley, just after being fitted with his first prosthetic, Rice skied for the first of many times: "It was awesome." Now an intern and grant writer for Disabled Sports USA, Rice is hoping to earn certification as an adaptive ski instructor, to pass on what he has learned.

The stories of Mark Wellman and Steve Rice should prove humbling for most Americans, many of whom consider time to be the biggest obstacle to enjoying regular physical activity. Why have people like Wellman and Rice worked so hard, for so long, to overcome much more daunting obstacles? When you read the stories on the Web site for Disabled Sports USA ([www.dsusa.org](http://www.dsusa.org)), you learn what skiing, cycling, golf, kayaking, swimming, and even walking mean to people who once believed that such activities were suddenly taken away and were permanently out of reach. To them, physical activity is not a chore. It has healed parts of them and transformed their lives.

The problems Americans without disabilities encounter are twofold for those who have disabilities. Because they are often inactive, obesity and cardiovascular disease can be big problems; their inactivity can lead to type 2 diabetes. Having a disability is not an excuse to avoid being active. There are sports for people with the most severe disabilities. And certainly, if you have a disability such as a single or even a double amputation, you can be active in a dozen different sports from kayaking to cycling to sailing to outrigger canoeing to skiing – both alpine and snowboarding. All of those things are definitely accessible if you can get out and do them.

### Living Longer – and Better

Many older Americans are hesitant to be active because of frailty and apprehension. By 2030, more than 70 million Americans will be aged 65 or older. According to Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, head of the Kinesiology Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and chair of the nationwide Active Aging Partnership, there has been "a revolution in thinking about the importance of physical activity for older adults in the last 30 years. In the 1970s, if people saw an 80-year-old woman out speed-walking or jogging, they would do a double-take and be shocked. But now it's not at all unusual to see older adults being physically active. That's an indication that Americans have an increased understanding of the importance of physical activity to promote healthy aging."

Many older Americans today were competitive athletes in their youth – including a substantial number of women shut out

**Children from the Catherine T. Reed School in Lanham, Md., at the May 2004 launch of the "I Can Do It, You Can Do It," program play table tennis (this page) and scale a climbing wall (opposite), demonstrating adaptive equipment for children with different kinds of disabilities. Other activities at the launch included an obstacle course for wheelchair users and bowling for children with physical limitations. The "I Can Do It, You Can Do It" program supports good health and physical activity for the 6 million American children and youth who have disabilities and is a collaboration of the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Disability, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, and over 50 organizations.**



PCFSS photo by Joey King





of competition before Title IX – and are now competing as “master” athletes in a growing number of events across the country.

Fascinated with this trend, Brian Reilly, a Chicago publisher, decided to look into it further. “We did some research about two years ago that indicated there were about 7.2 million master athletes, which we define as people over the age of 40 who either compete in an organized sporting event or belong to a masters’ association,” says Reilly. “And I think that’s a very conservative number given the trends in aging and activity that we’re seeing in this country.”

Reilly and his partners decided this was a big enough market for a magazine. Now in its second year, *GeezerJock*, an online and print publication, has a circulation of 75,000 and is going strong, attracting a readership of committed master athletes. “There are dedicated masters’ sporting events almost every week of the year, and there are races and tournaments where master athletes are competing with and among younger athletes.” There are marathons, triathlons, and softball tournaments where people of all ages participate, Reilly says. “There are dedicated leagues and associations for master athletes in just about any sport. Think about any sport you played as a kid; there are still people, 40, 50, 60, 70, even 80, still playing it competitively.”

The *GeezerJock* publication has its own columnist – the Geezer Doc – who writes regularly to answer health-related questions and offer advice to experienced and novice master athletes. His name is Allan Tissenbaum, and in addition to being an orthopedic surgeon, he is the men’s 45-and-older world champion in the 100-meter sprint competition, which was held in August 2005 at the World Master Athletics Championships in San Sebastián, Spain. Tissenbaum, who often trains at a local track at 10 p.m., long after the lights have been turned off, to accommodate his busy schedule, realizes that most people who participate in master athletics are not as intensely competitive. “The way masters elite track and field is set up, it’s not exclusionary,” says

PCPFS photo by Joey King

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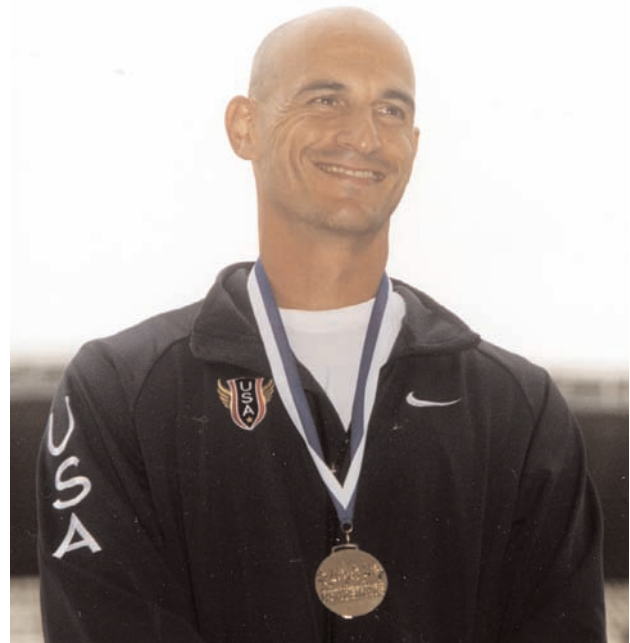
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Top left: A disabled skier makes his way down a slope at the 2005 Hartford Ski Spectacular, a Disabled Sports USA event. Better training and better equipment, as well as a more positive outlook on the capabilities of the disabled, have factored into more opportunities for those with disabilities to participate in sports. Above: Dr. Allan Tissenbaum, GeezerJock's own Geezer Doc, in addition to being an orthopedic surgeon, is an accomplished athlete. He is pictured here in 2005 at the World Master Athletics Championships in San Sebastián, Spain. Bottom left: The publication GeezerJock was created in response to the trend of people being active and athletically competitive in their later years.



Tissenbaum. "Anyone can participate who wants to participate, so if you decide you want to go to the national championships, whether you're 150th in the country or first in the country, you're allowed to do it. ... So people do get into it because they're out of shape or they've been told by

their physician to get in shape because they have a heart condition or they're diabetic or have high blood pressure. So they start doing it and, as they become comfortable with it, they try to find the next level, which might be a competition."

As the Geezer Doc, Tissenbaum is well aware that older athletes take longer to get into shape if they have been inactive for some time. He advises them to approach training with caution: "Go to the family doctor and have him do a thorough examination of you - you know, not so much of your muscles and your joints, but of your heart and your lungs. The next thing to do would be to start slow ... you know, if you haven't done anything, start walking. If you've been walking, start running."

Despite the growing number of master athletes, it's a good guess that most older Americans would enjoy more laid-back activities than training for world championships. These people, says Chodzko-Zajko, should not suffer from the outdated impression that their age limits their options. "There are many people in their 60s and 70s who can follow a similar exercise training regimen as people 20 or 30 years younger," he says. "However, there may be some people who, because of their health or their personal preference, will want to select a less-intense combination of activities as they grow older."



**President's Council member Pamela Danberg (left), president of the Dwarf Athletic Association, and Juliette Rizzo (center), Miss Wheelchair USA, speak with a member of the public during a Council meeting.**

More important than reviving the weekend warrior, says Chodzko-Zajko, is the effort to remain regularly active and healthy – to maintain a life-long culture of physical activity. “There’s a lot of interest in convincing people to be more physically active, which may or may not include ‘exercise,’ if you define exercise as a deliberate leisure time physical activity occurring in a specific place, usually using specific equipment and clothing,” he says. “It is important for people to realize that they have the option to build more physical activity into their daily lives by selecting active choices such as walking to work, taking the stairs, and healthy commuting. That’s not really well-described as ‘exercise’ in the traditional sense.”

Melissa Johnson, executive director of the PCPFS, says these simple changes in lifestyle can have a profound effect on the quality of life for older Americans. “It’s really important to stay active for functional fitness. As people get older, they just want to be able to do simple things like walk up the stairs, put groceries away, and be able to lift up their arms to put cans on a high shelf – or even be able to get off a chair without hurting their backs,” she says. At the recent White House Conference on Aging, the PCPFS conducted a healthy living celebration that

hosted a series of activities for improving seniors’ functional health.

The four areas identified by Johnson, Chodzko-Zajko, and other experts as the foundation for older Americans’ physical activity – endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance – present a wide array of options for physical activity. Activities that improve cardiovascular endurance include jogging, brisk walking, swimming, cycling, and dancing. Strength can be increased with activities that build muscle and bone, such as calisthenics, Pilates, weightlifting, or rowing. Better flexibility can be achieved through activities such as yoga, Pilates, ballet, and martial arts. Balance can be helped by yoga and martial arts – especially Tai Chi – or with posture exercises or weight machines that strengthen leg and lower back muscles.

No matter what their reason for becoming more physically active, says Tissenbaum, it’s important for people to discover an activity that they enjoy and that works their large muscle groups. “This is a lifelong commitment people should be making,” he says. “If they’re 50, you know, they’re going to be around 35 more years. You can maintain physical fitness until you’re 90. There are people running track who are a hundred years old. It’s sort of inspiring.”

### Staying Active for the Right Reasons

The 2005 Census Bureau abstract that warned about the rise of sports spectatorship at the expense of participation included another interesting statistic: Among Americans who do manage to get off the couch, the most popular sporting activity was walking.

In other words, most Americans who are physically active have chosen a simple, natural activity that costs nothing, is easy to do, and which they enjoy doing with their friends and family. According to sports sociologist Yiannakis, “In the hierarchy of reasons why people participate in sports, health and fitness are not actually the highest motives. It’s for enjoyment, for personal empowerment, for looking good, for feeling good, for enjoying personal relationships. ... These are the reasons that actually keep people physically active. People whose primary reason for exercising is health and fitness don’t stay with it. They don’t adhere.”

“People have to enjoy the intrinsic aspects of physical activity,” says Yiannakis. “It’s like reading a good book – not because you’ll be tested by some professor, but because you like to lose yourself in the beauty, the history, the language of the book. The pure satisfaction you get from doing something for its own sake – that’s what keeps people engaged in physical activity.”

This is, says Johnson, the most important facet of the President’s Council’s mission: “Our message is to promote any activity that a person can do that they enjoy. Because consistency is key, and we want people to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyle so it becomes part of their routine – as routine as brushing your teeth.” In its list of more than 100 activities that count toward participation in its Presidential Active Lifestyle Award program, the Council has included not only long-popular pursuits such as jogging, tennis, and swimming, but also activities that have not traditionally been included in the sports/fitness canon, such as walking, golf, Tai Chi, sailing, and gardeninig, Walking, says





Johnson, is considered a “gateway” activity for many Americans; once they get involved regularly and realize how much better it makes them feel, they move on to other activities and enjoy the different health benefits of each. Once a competitive gymnast and a jazz dance instructor, Johnson now enjoys yoga, Pilates, weight training, walking, jogging – “a little bit of everything, just to keep it varied.”

Very few Americans are busier today than Lynn Swann, until recently the chairman of the PCPFS. One of the most admired professional football players of his time, Swann played nine seasons for the Pittsburgh Steelers beginning in 1974, boasting a career that saw him collect numerous honors. He was inducted into the National Football League Hall of Fame in 2001.

Swann’s introduction to physical activity was a dance class, taken as a young boy, followed by an intense love for basketball. For Swann, sports have never been about winning. “The whole idea of sport is not that you have to be the best at what you do, but that you have an opportunity to play at something you enjoy. ... The real challenge and message for the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is to get people to be more physically active, not to be an elite athlete. A very small number of people in this country qualify, train, have the discipline and dedication, and the luck to get to that level. But all of us can enhance our lives and can increase our stamina, abilities, and the quality of our lives by being more physically active.” Today, as a sports broadcaster and a political candidate on a grueling campaign schedule, Swann still finds time for the activities he enjoys, often with his children: bicycling, lifting weights, skiing, stretching – and yes, walking.

It shouldn’t be surprising that the exciting things going on in Americans’ physical lives – in PE classes, among its disabled and older populations, and among many others – are often obscured by gloomy statistics about obesity and declining health. The obesity epidemic is cause for great concern, of course, and an important key to improving one’s overall health is to remain physically active. But the experiences of people such as Dot Richardson, Francesca Zavacky, Kirk Bauer, Melissa Johnson, and Lynn Swann suggest that to focus on the negative consequences of not being active is far less helpful than to simply realize the joy of movement.

**Melissa Johnson (executive director) and Lynn Swann, (chairman, 2002-2005), at a President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports meeting.**



PCPFS photo

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# MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

**Nutrition, Physical Activity, Screenings,  
and Risk Avoidance are  
Keys to Good Health**

 *By Tara N. Wilfong*

**M**any Americans today are more health conscious than ever. They check food labels consistently and try to maintain a regular physical activity program. Even so, about two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese, 16 percent of American children are overweight, and few Americans get the recommended 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, and type 2 diabetes are linked to obesity. As a major cause of preventable death in the United States today, overweight and obesity pose a significant public health challenge.

The federal government's HealthierUS initiative urges Americans to make modest changes in their lifestyles by adopting four simple but vital behaviors: Be physically active every day; eat a nutritious diet; get preventive screenings; and avoid risky behaviors.







Health and nutrition professionals in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are working together to create programs and resources to educate Americans about how to achieve a healthy lifestyle through sound nutrition and regular physical activity, two key components of HealthierUS.

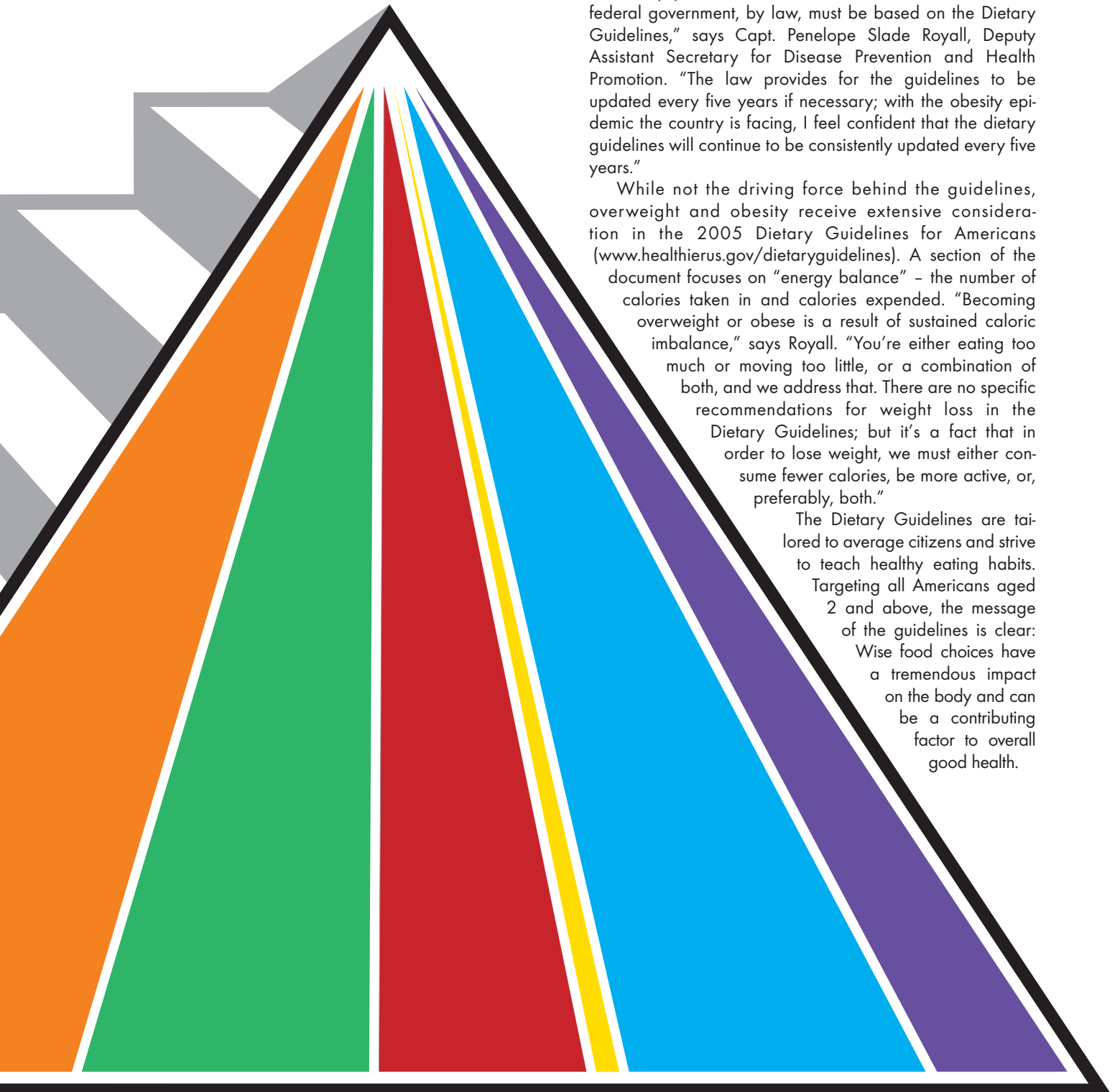
### 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Since 1980, HHS and USDA have jointly published the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, an authoritative guide on diet and health. The Dietary Guidelines, based on current peer-reviewed science, are the government's basis for all nutritional advice to its citizens.

"Every piece of nutritional advice that comes from the federal government, by law, must be based on the Dietary Guidelines," says Capt. Penelope Slade Royall, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "The law provides for the guidelines to be updated every five years if necessary; with the obesity epidemic the country is facing, I feel confident that the dietary guidelines will continue to be consistently updated every five years."

While not the driving force behind the guidelines, overweight and obesity receive extensive consideration in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans ([www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)). A section of the document focuses on "energy balance" – the number of calories taken in and calories expended. "Becoming overweight or obese is a result of sustained caloric imbalance," says Royall. "You're either eating too much or moving too little, or a combination of both, and we address that. There are no specific recommendations for weight loss in the Dietary Guidelines; but it's a fact that in order to lose weight, we must either consume fewer calories, be more active, or, preferably, both."

The Dietary Guidelines are tailored to average citizens and strive to teach healthy eating habits. Targeting all Americans aged 2 and above, the message of the guidelines is clear: Wise food choices have a tremendous impact on the body and can be a contributing factor to overall good health.





“We’re seeing increases in the rate of type 2 diabetes in children,” says Kate Coler, deputy undersecretary, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services at the USDA. “Type 2 diabetes was once considered an adult-onset disease. If current trends don’t change, one in three persons born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes over the course of their lifetime.” While following the guidelines does not guarantee a lifetime free of disease, sound nutrition contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle.

During the development of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, an advisory committee of 13 experts in a variety of disciplines worked with HHS and USDA health and nutrition professionals to make historic changes to the document. For the first time, the guidelines contain a complete chapter on physical activity, now recognized as a major factor in achieving and sustaining overall health. In its report to the HHS and USDA Secretaries, the Dietary Guidelines panel recommended that everyone engage in some type of daily physical activity, which goes hand-in-hand with sound nutrition. For health benefits,

children need 60 minutes of physical activity, preferably every day of the week. The average American adult should engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days to achieve health benefits. To avoid weight gain, some adults may need up to 60 minutes of physical activity each day; to sustain weight loss, some may need 60 to 90 minutes.

For those who find setting aside 30 to 90 minutes a day for physical activity too difficult, evidence shows that breaking activity into 10-minute increments throughout the day has significant health benefits.

“It doesn’t matter how old you are, exercise will benefit your health,” says







## The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

50 Years Promoting Health and Fitness

fitness expert Denise Austin, a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. "Just start with 15 minutes a day and gradually build it up so that it becomes part of your daily routine. It really doesn't take that much to get in shape, but you have to start somewhere."

The Dietary Guidelines are available online and from the Government Printing Office for those without computer access. A tool kit has been created and geared directly toward educators and health professionals. Individuals seeking a lifestyle change will be interested in a newly published book entitled *A Healthier You*. Published by HHS, the book contains a motivational section, recipes from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the complete Dietary Guidelines. The book is available at major bookstores and through online book sellers and costs between \$10 and \$12. "We're trying to get published information into the places where Americans live, shop, and work," Royall says. "Eventually, I'd like to see *A Healthier You* in every school and even in grocery stores so that it is available to a wider segment of the population." For older Americans and those who speak English as a second language, HHS is creating brochures to reach these populations.

### USDA Food Guidance System

The USDA's Food Guidance System, popularly known as the "food pyramid," is based on the Dietary Guidelines and was designed to be a consumer tool with instant recognition. The Food Guidance System was first developed in 1992 to summarize the recommendations of the Dietary

**Capt. Penelope Slade Royall, HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.**



Guidelines and put them into an easy-to-understand visual form. Historically, the food pyramid focused on eating a balanced diet based on the major food groups: milk, grains, fruit, vegetables, and meat.

The revised pyramid ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)), based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, was introduced in April 2005. The new visual slightly modifies how some of the food groups are portrayed, such as sugars and fats, and makes physical activity a major element in the design.

"'MyPyramid' is about the ability of Americans to personalize their approach when choosing a healthier lifestyle that balances nutrition and exercise," says USDA Secretary Mike Johanns. "Many Americans can dramatically improve their overall health by making modest improvements to their diets and by incorporating regular physical activity into their daily lives."

According to Coler, "The Food Guide Pyramid comes out of the Dietary Guidelines as a way to simplify some of the recommendations and make them easier for Americans to understand and follow. The new Dietary Guidelines gave us the opportunity to bring the pyramid to life and to make it more effective for all Americans. There are three major consumer messages that are consistent to both the pyramid and the Dietary Guidelines: to make smart choices from every food group, to find balance between food and physical activity, and to get the most nutrition out of your calories."

The pyramid has the new name, "MyPyramid," to give it a personalized flavor. The updated graphic depicts physical activity along with the breakdown of the major food groups. Austin, representing the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, helped launch the new USDA Food Guidance System.

"Food isn't the enemy, sitting still is the enemy," Austin says. "As Americans, we've pigeonholed ourselves into lack of movement, so it's time to get Americans moving and feeling better about themselves. We all deserve to look and feel great."

For the first time, physical activity is prominently displayed by steps ascending the side of the pyramid, with a figure climbing the steps, to emphasize the importance of physical activity. Moderation is stressed by the narrowing of each food group from the bottom to the top. The wider sections represent foods with little or no solid fats or added sugars, which should be selected more often; the narrower sections represent foods containing fats and sugars, which should be consumed in moderation. Americans who are more physically active can indulge in foods containing fats and sugars more often than less-active individuals.

Proportionality is represented by the varying widths of the food group bands, suggesting the amount to be consumed from each group. Variety is shown by the six color bands that represent the five food groups as well as oils. Foods from all groups must be consumed every day for good health. Finally, gradual improvement – not immediate success – is encouraged. Individuals are reminded that by taking small steps each day, a long-term health plan and lifestyle change can certainly be achieved.



Since you're never too young to pursue a healthy lifestyle, the USDA also launched MyPyramid for Kids, geared toward elementary age children. With the same general graphic as MyPyramid, the kids' version incorporates a child ascending the stairs and easy-to-understand explanations of the six criteria. The slogan has also been tweaked to appeal to this age group: "Eat Right. Exercise. Have Fun."



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## TRACKING HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ONLINE

Since many Americans now get health information on the Internet, both USDA and HHS have developed online tools to assist in healthy eating and regular physical activity. For those who do not use a computer and cannot access information over the Internet, direct-marketing campaigns have been created, and print materials are available.

### [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

The interactive Web site of the new Food Guidance System developed by USDA is equipped with a tracking program ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)) that can be tailored to each individual's dietary and physical activity habits. MyPyramid.gov has four main features to help Americans achieve a healthy lifestyle: MyPyramid Plan, MyPyramid Tracker, Inside MyPyramid, and Tips & Resources. Under MyPyramid Plan, consumers can enter their age, gender, and average daily physical activity to receive a customized food-consumption printout, which includes the number of calories to be consumed daily, as well as specific breakdowns on the amounts of grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, and beans to eat each day. In addition, a weekly breakdown of vegetables is provided, as are specific goals for oils and discretionary calories. MyPyramid Tracker allows consumers to enter their age, gender, height, and weight and track their daily food intake and physical activity. Through this tracking program, consumers can see at the click of a button how much exercise they need and how many calories to eat in order to maintain their current weight. Packed with nutritional guidance and relevant messages tailored to each individual, MyPyramid Tracker also aids consumers who are trying to shed pounds.

Inside MyPyramid provides in-depth information about each of the five food groups and lists the foods included in each group. In addition, as a consumer resource, this section breaks down recommended daily amounts of each food group into easy-to-understand measurements, such as cups and ounces. The section also offers daily recommendations for physical activity and for choosing healthy oils and discretionary calories. The Tips & Resources section of MyPyramid.gov offers consumers simple tips on implementing a diet and exercise plan to last a lifetime. Incorporating specific food group tips, as well as a sample menu, tips for eating out, and tips for eating a healthy vegetarian diet, this section shows that making a few simple changes now can lead to better health in the future.

The core message of the Steps to a Healthier You feature of [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) is that one size doesn't fit all. The new graphic visually motivates individuals by focusing on six criteria: activity, moderation, personalization, proportionality, variety, and gradual improvement. Children visiting [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) can play the interactive MyPyramid Blast-Off game, which encourages them to make wise food choices to "fuel" their rocket ship. If they choose wisely, their rocket blasts off and takes them to their final destination – Planet Power. MyPyramid has been translated into Spanish to target an expanded segment of the population. Since its launch in April 2005, [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) has received more than a billion hits.

### [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports offers the President's Challenge Program, which includes a free, online tracking and motivational tool ([www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)) that allows individuals to keep track of their physical activity. Launched in July 2003 to complement the HealthierUS Initiative, the President's Challenge Web site offers an awards program that encourages citizens to achieve set fitness goals. While the performance-based President's Council Physical Fitness Test has been in schools for 40 years – and is still utilized by 32,000 schools nationwide – the online model is an up-to-date tool for all Americans to use.

"Because of the sedentary lifestyles and the poor shape of the nation, we wanted to come up with programs that motivated and inspired individuals to get active and receive presidential recognition for moderate physical activity," says Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President's Council. "We've made this powerful tool available to all Americans to help them be healthy, active, and fit for the rest of their lives. The program is for families, schools, businesses, organizations, and individuals who want to be active or motivate others to become physically active for health, as well as for those who are already active, to help them attain the highest possible fitness level. We want physical activity to be part of a person's routine that they take from childhood all the way to adulthood and make it part of their lifestyle. The Web site is an easy, no cost, and fun-to-use way to become active today and stay active for life."

Here's how the new Web site works: Log on to [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), select an age category



- Kids, Teens, Adults, or Seniors - and register as an individual or part of a group. Choose from over 100 physical activities listed and start tracking daily efforts in a private log. The program can be done by individuals and also has a group component.

Everyone can work toward a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award by participating in regular physical activity five days a week for six weeks. Adults should be active for at least 30 minutes of daily activity, and children for at least 60 minutes each day. Those who don't use the Internet can earn the award by filling in a paper log. Americans who are already physically active can earn the new Presidential Champions award online. Points are earned by logging in each activity. Participants can work toward a Bronze, Silver, or Gold award.

[www.smallstep.gov](http://www.smallstep.gov)

For individuals who don't know how to get started, [www.smallstep.gov](http://www.smallstep.gov) offers ways to change behavior one small step at a time. The Web site also has a special section for children, who can implement small changes each day to attain a healthy lifestyle as well. Used in conjunction with MyPyramid Tracker, this tool makes it simple to attain the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

"Children really look to their parents for guidance when it comes to exercise and making smart food choices," Austin says. "So it's important that we are all aware of the lifestyles we lead and that we teach our children good habits so they can engage in a healthy lifestyle as well."

The obesity epidemic increases the importance of public information resources such as the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid. "When we created MyPyramid, we wanted to portray a complete picture on a healthy lifestyle - eating a balanced and nutritious diet as well as engaging in physical activity," Coler says. "While drastic changes can't be made overnight, we are encouraging Americans to make consistent behavioral changes that will last a lifetime."

Numerous educational materials on the new Food Guidance System, such as posters and lesson plans, are available to schools and healthcare professionals. Food manufacturers are being encouraged to incorporate the new visuals into food labels and packaging to familiarize consumers with the latest nutrition information.

Both HHS and USDA are working with government and private-sector partners on the local, regional, and national levels to educate the public about nutrition and physical activity by consistently focusing on the messages prescribed by the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid. "Everyone is realizing that we need to work together to solve this problem; no one entity can solve it alone," says Royall.

## Congratulations for 50 Years of getting America fit. Where do you get the energy?







# THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC

By Craig Collins

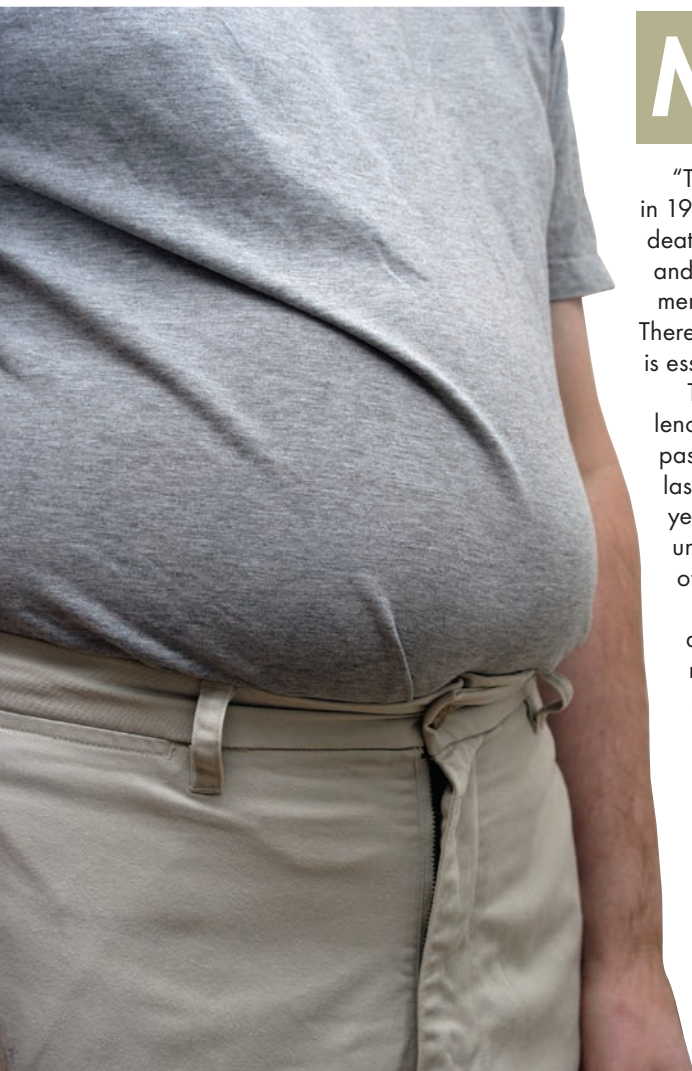
## Physical Activity as Preventive Medicine

**M**ost Americans know that overweight and physical inactivity are related, but many may not realize the serious health hazards posed by sedentary living. Eating too much and moving too little can literally kill you. Thousands of Americans die each year because of poor diet and physical inactivity.

"The Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health," released in 1996, concluded that regular physical activity reduces the risk of premature death in general and of coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes in particular. Regular physical activity also improves mental health and is important for the health of muscles, bones, and joints. There is no doubt that physical activity helps to achieve a healthy weight and is essential for successfully maintaining weight loss.

Ten years later in 2006, the United States has the world's highest prevalence of obesity. The rate has risen steadily among most age groups over the past 20 years and increased 50 percent or more in every state during the last decade. Obesity contributes to the deaths of 1.7 million Americans each year, hinders daily living for another 25 million, and - together with an unhealthy diet - may one day overtake tobacco use as the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

Health officials and practitioners freely use the word "epidemic," traditionally applied to infectious diseases, to describe the rise in obesity rates. During the two decades that began in 1980, the rate of obesity more than doubled among American adults and tripled among youth and teens. The prevalence of type 2 diabetes - a disease with a strong correlation to obesity and overweight - also increased. From 1990 to 2000, the number of adults with type 2 diabetes increased by more than 60 percent, including a 70 percent increase among adults aged 30 to 39. Every year, obesity and diabetes account for more than \$250 million in direct and indirect health costs in the United States.





Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, believes it is impossible to overstate the seriousness of America's current health crisis. "About 65 percent of Americans are either overweight or obese," says Johnson. "Sixteen percent of our young people - 9 million children - are overweight. What is equally alarming is that type 2 diabetes, which was once termed "adult onset" diabetes, is now showing up in very young children - 8, 9, and 10 years old. So we do have a crisis on our hands. It's the first time in modern history that a generation of children may not live as long as their parents."

In September 2004, the President's Council published an article in its *Physical Activity and Fitness Research Digest* series entitled "Seeing Ourselves Through the Obesity Epidemic." Three guest authors from the University of Arizona linked obesity to environmental factors: Americans are less active than they have been in the past. They spend more time in sedentary pursuits such as television, video games, and the Internet; they live in neighborhoods that are developed and built in a way that discourages walking to school or anywhere else; and they spend a decreasing amount of active time in schools or at the worksite.

Dr. Tedd Mitchell, a member of the Council, directs the Cooper Wellness Program at the Aerobics Center in Dallas, Texas, and also serves as vice president and associate medical director for the Cooper Clinic. He is a prominent researcher and author in the area of health maintenance and disease prevention through physical fitness and proper nutrition. According to Mitchell, the first strike against American youth is their lack of activity while in school. Daily enrollment in physical education classes dropped from 42 percent to 25 percent among high school students between 1991 and 1995; by 2003 the number had barely improved, holding at 28 percent. Today, less than 7 percent of middle and junior high schools and 6 percent of senior high schools require daily physical activity for all students.

Kids are also less active at home, says Mitchell. "If you look at what kids are doing when they get home now, it used to be that you'd run home, grab a snack, you'd do your homework, and head outdoors to play," he says. "And now the kids will run home, have a snack, and then plop down in front of the TV or plop down in front of the computer to start playing games. The data from HHS [Department of Health and Human Services] says that the average American child now spends about four

hours per day in front of a TV. And that's certainly part of the problem."

The other, equally significant part of the problem, according to health professionals, is our diet. "We now have readily available high-calorie food everywhere around us. So it's a double-whammy effect. The kids aren't staying active either at home or at school, as they have before, and they have ready availability of basically junk food when they get home - fast food that's easy to eat, easy to prepare, and just loaded with calories and oftentimes pretty deplete in nutrients," Mitchell says. "At the end of the day, it always just gets back to thermodynamics. It's calories in and calories out."

### Metabolic Syndrome

Because of their obvious relationship to each other - nearly nine out of 10 people with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes are overweight - obesity and diabetes are often mentioned together as a growing problem. But it's important to note, says Mitchell, that they don't exist together in isolation. They are part of a larger health problem whose broad scope has only recently gained recognition among health professionals: the metabolic syndrome. "Very few people have even heard of metabolic syndrome," says Mitchell, "which in fact since two years ago has acquired its own ICD-9 diagnosis code for physicians. It's a real problem."

There are five criteria to meet what's called metabolic syndrome, Mitchell says. "One of them is increased weight - and not necessarily obesity, but just increased weight over an accepted weight standard. The second one is abnormal blood sugar - not even necessarily diabetic, but just blood sugar levels that are elevated into what's been called the impaired glucose tolerance range. The third criterion is low HDL cholesterol, which is the good cholesterol - once again not dramatically low, just a little bit low, below 35. The fourth criteria is increased blood pressure - not necessarily hypertension, but blood pressure



Dr. Tedd Mitchell





***Not long ago, obesity was typically considered to be an adult health issue. Now it afflicts every generation. The recent epidemic of childhood obesity is only made worse by the low number of junior and senior high schools that require daily physical activity of their students.***

readings above 135 over 80. And the last criteria is an elevated triglyceride count, and not necessarily dramatically elevated, but above 125. And the combination of those five factors together are devastating when you look at long-term cardiovascular risk and diabetes risk."

The reason metabolic syndrome often stays under the radar, Mitchell says, is that these five criteria are not usually measured together by physicians. "The problem with metabolic syndrome is that not only does it go undiagnosed or unrecognized among patients and folks in general, but it's also not often recognized among physicians," Mitchell explains. "So they've got patients coming in and their blood pressure's up a bit, but not dramatically. Their good cholesterol's down a bit but not dramatically. Their triglycerides are up a bit but not dramatically. Their weight's up a little bit - and if they start clustering these traits together, it's a real mess. Now, that's the bad news."

### **How Physical Activity Can Help**

But according to Mitchell, the news isn't all bad. "The good news from the President's Council perspective is that all five criteria for metabolic syndrome can be improved by physical activity. One of the things we try to get people to pay more attention to is, rather than just paying more atten-

tion to weight, pay attention to lifestyle. If you pay attention to the activity and try to develop a consistent activity program, not only will weight start tending to take care of itself, but even if the weight doesn't change, physiologically your body is changing in a favorable way."

Much of the data linking physical activity to weight loss is still observational, rather than empirical, but researchers such as Mitchell have learned quite a bit over the past decade. Observational studies have shown physical activity is significantly correlated with weight and body fat. People who have lost weight report participating in significant amounts of daily physical activity, and physical activity is the best predictor of weight maintenance after weight loss. Other studies have consistently demonstrated that regular physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, osteoporosis, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

In fact, since the 1970s, enough information has been available about the benefits of vigorous exercise on cardiorespiratory fitness that organizations such as the President's Council, the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Heart Association, and others have been issuing physical activity recommendations to the public.



Of course, today's surveys show that very few Americans exercise vigorously, and it has only been in recent years that the effects of less vigorous activity, practiced regularly, have been examined. One of the most remarkable studies in recent years, the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), was a clinical trial conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services among 3,234 people with impaired glucose tolerance (a condition that often precedes diabetes) at 27 different locations across the country. The study compared three randomly assigned groups: those who underwent an intense lifestyle change consisting of diet and exercise; those who adopted no lifestyle changes but treated themselves with the anti-diabetic drug metformin; and a control group that took placebo pills in place of metformin.

The results of the DPP were monumental: The participants who were assigned to diet and exercise reduced their risk of getting type 2 diabetes by a staggering 58 percent, while those who were randomized to treatment with metformin reduced their risk by 31 percent. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), faced with such a convincing body of evidence, terminated the DPP early and announced its results in August of 2001.



### How Much Physical Activity?

On average, members of the DPP group that reduced their diabetes risk through diet and exercise maintained their physical activity at 30 minutes per day, usually with walking or other moderate intensity exercise, and lost 5-7 percent of their body weight - usually around 10 to 15 pounds. In other words, despite impressive changes in their glucose tolerance levels, most didn't lose enough weight to bring themselves out of the overweight category.

Since the mid-1990s, when the existence of an obesity epidemic became irrefutable, the optimal dose of physical activity has been a controversy. The current recommendations, released jointly by the CDC and the American College of Sports Medicine in 1995, and later endorsed by the U.S. Surgeon General, the NIH, and the American Heart Association, promote 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most - preferably all - days of the week. This equates to about 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, or an energy expenditure of approximately 1,000 kilocalories per week.

This recommendation was aimed largely at sedentary adults, who account for much of the public health burden of chronic disease. Weight loss and weight maintenance were not the primary considerations. According to Mitchell, many health professionals believe that the recommended 30 minutes of daily physical activity is not a sufficient amount for achieving physical fitness. Some experts believe that because of the obesity epidemic, physical activity guidelines should help people to successfully lose weight and keep it off. Another argument is that since developing a consistent program of 30-minute activity sessions five times a week has tremendous health benefits, we should recommend this amount of activity as a more achievable standard. The fear is that recommending a minimum of 60 minutes five days a week would discourage the inactive 60 percent of the population from trying to be active at all.



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"We went with the lower amount in the hope that people will look at that and understand that it is very achievable," Mitchell says. "If what you're after is reducing your risk for certain types of chronic illnesses and improving your fitness, then 30 minutes five days a week of a moderately intense walking program is great. If you say, however, 'Well, my goal is weight loss,' well, that program is inadequate. The calorie-burning you need really needs to step up, and probably at minimum, you need five times a week at 45 minutes per session, and preferably five times a week at 60 minutes per session."

Moreover, weight gain prevention, weight loss, and weight maintenance after loss are three separate issues, each requiring a different level of energy expenditure, and each needs to be addressed by a different physical activity program, Mitchell says. To outline an appropriate exercise program for weight loss, Americans should consult with their physicians or healthcare teams, a step that should be taken as a matter of course for anyone who has been sedentary for an extended period of time.

Although Mitchell agrees that exercise can be an important tool for weight control, he shares a belief, common to many health professionals, that in light of the nation's current health statistics, weight alone is not as significant a factor as it is when combined with the other elements of the metabolic

syndrome, including glucose intolerance. "I think even experts have become kind of fixated on weight," Mitchell says, "rather than really trying to address lifestyle changes in general regardless of weight."

Tedd Mitchell, Melissa Johnson, and the other members of the Council understand that the obesity epidemic didn't develop overnight and that environmental and lifestyle conditions often work against change. They know it will take time before most Americans are able to become active enough to ward off the adverse health risks associated with obesity. In order for that to happen, Johnson says, physical activity needs to become less of a chore, and more of what it once was – an experience as common and pleasurable as eating and sleeping. "We need to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives and into the American psyche," says Johnson. "The analogy I like to use is this: Look where we were 40 years ago with regard to the tobacco issue, how far we've come in educating Americans about the health risks of smoking. We are planting seeds now, but it may take years to see the numbers come down – to see most Americans regularly moving and active. The important work we're doing right now with our public- and private-sector partners is to try to reverse the trend."

***In recent years, research has shown the benefits of low-intensity exercise – like walking – coupled with proper diet have a profound effect in curbing the onset of type 2 diabetes.***





# PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

## A Win-Win Proposition PCPFS Salutes Its Partners for Support in Promoting an Active America

By Laura Spinale

**F**rom its founding in 1956, the President's Council on Youth Fitness, later renamed the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS), was intended to be a catalyst to alert Americans about the importance of being physically active and fit and to stimulate and motivate people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to engage in physical activity for overall health and well-being. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who founded the Council, never envisioned the organization as a federal agency that disburses grants or develops federally funded national programs. In a letter to the President's Conference on the Fitness of American Youth (June 19, 1956), President Eisenhower wrote, "The fitness of our young people is essentially a home and local community problem."

Today, in the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in downtown Washington, D.C., seven federal employees in the HHS Office of Public Health and Science, under the leadership of the executive director, together administer the daily business of the Council, a federal advisory committee of 20 volunteer citizens appointed by the president. How does an organization of 20 volunteers supported by a staff of only seven accomplish the Council's important mission – to stimulate Americans of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to become physically active and fit? And how does that small organization accomplish this responsibility with only enough congressionally authorized funding to administer a small office?

### Public-Private Partnerships

From the Council's earliest years, its programs, activities, events, and public information initiatives have been funded

almost exclusively through partnerships with private businesses and nonprofit organizations eager to help carry the health and fitness banner throughout the nation. Through partnering with corporations, educational and medical institutions, not-for-profits, and other organizations, the PCPFS is able to reach deep into American communities to spread a simple message: Regular physical activity improves health and fitness and makes life enjoyable and fun!

Since Congress does not appropriate funds for its programs, the PCPFS welcomes relationships with co-sponsors, the government's term for partners. Working closely with the Council's full-time staff, co-sponsors propose collaborations, jointly develop criteria, and fund the initiatives, which are then promoted and disseminated mutually by the Council and its partners. Co-sponsors are offered the opportunity to have their names and logos appear alongside those of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards program.

According to Lauve Metcalfe, now with the Center for Physical Activity and Nutrition at the University of Arizona, an excellent example of a successful public/private partnership is the longstanding collaboration between the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and Campbell Soup, where Metcalfe worked in the 1980s: "By cosponsoring White House symposiums, state workshops, and local fitness activities, Campbell Soup was able to make a contribution to public health through funding activities designed to motivate, educate, and activate both the health and fitness community and the general public."

"We depend on partnerships," says longtime PCPFS staff member Christine Spain, director of Research, Planning and Special Projects for the Council. Spain has worked for the





**Christine Spain, PCPFS director of Research, Planning and Special Projects, manages the President's Challenge program.**



Council for 25 years. "Our role has always been to serve as a catalyst, to stimulate and support the work of the many other organizations around the country dedicated to promoting physical activity, fitness, and sports. We need organizations at the grassroots level to help us spread our health messages and make our physical activity programs available to the public. We can't send people into each city or community. We have to depend on local organizations and people who are already there."

### **President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program**

Since 1988, the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program has been administered through a partnership with the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). The President's Challenge is offered nationwide to young people through schools and youth organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, camps, YMCA/YWCAs, and faith-based and other youth organizations and activities. This program measures children's fitness components to determine their physical fitness levels for receipt of the Presidential, National, or Participant Award, as well as the Health Fitness Award.

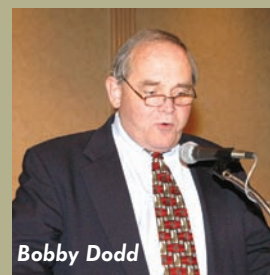
The program also has a State Champion Award component - recognizing the three schools from each state with the highest number of student winners of the highest award, the

### **PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE PARTNERS: AMATEUR ATHLETIC UNION AND INDIANA UNIVERSITY**

Since 1988, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) has collaborated with the Indiana School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER) to administer the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The Physical Fitness Program helps assess current fitness levels of youth aged 6-17 and offers awards, including patches and certificates, to encourage kids to get active and fit. The Physical Fitness Program is used by schools, after-school programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, camps, recreation centers, and other youth organizations to promote health and fitness.

The President's Challenge program came of age with the introduction of the Active Lifestyle Program, allowing American adults, including seniors, to take the President's Challenge by making a commitment to active living. A new interactive Web site that tracks physical activity online was introduced in 2003 ([www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)). The Web site includes the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) and the Presidential Champions award.

As one of the largest nonprofit volunteer sports organizations in the United States, the AAU is dedicated exclusively to the promotion and development of amateur sports and physical fitness programs. Robert W. ("Bobby") Dodd has served as president and CEO of the AAU since 1992. The President's Challenge program was brought to the Indiana School of HPER under the guidance of Director Wynn F. Updyke and Program Manager Mike Willett, who now serves as director; Jeff McClaine is associate director, and Brendon Hale is assistant director.



**Bobby Dodd**



**Mike Willett**



**Jeff McClaine**



**Brendon Hale**



Presidential Physical Fitness Award. The PCPFS Physical Activity and Fitness Demonstration Program, another component of the President's Challenge, recognizes the elementary, middle, and high schools with the highest quality of physical education programs in each state. Schools selected make their programs available to visitors interested in using them as models in developing their own PE programs.

The President's Challenge program receives no federal funds for any of its components, which today include the President's Challenge Physical Fitness Program and Health Fitness Program for youth aged 6 to 17, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) for Americans aged 6 and above, and the Presidential Champions program for youth, teens, and adults, including seniors. Use of the President's Challenge program is free. The only cost is for the array of optional awards available, including certificates, patches, lapel pins, ribbons, and medals. Funds collected through the sale of awards are put back

into the President's Challenge program to create additional resources for teachers, youth, organizers, and the general public.

Every few years, the PCPFS places a notice in the Federal Register calling for proposals from potential co-sponsors to administer the President's Challenge program. The AAU, which has been selected to administer the President's Challenge since 1988, sub-contracts the daily operation of the program to the University of Indiana School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER). Prior to that time, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) co-sponsored the President's Challenge program.

Following the publication in 1996 of "Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General," the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports worked with a panel of experts to expand the President's Challenge program to include an award for active lifestyles, the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA). This program recognizes youngsters and adults who undertake six weeks of physical activity. To receive the award, individuals must be active five or more days a week for six weeks, adults for at least 30 minutes and youth aged 6 to 17 for at least 60 minutes. Adults and children may also use a pedometer and meet a minimum number of daily steps to earn awards.

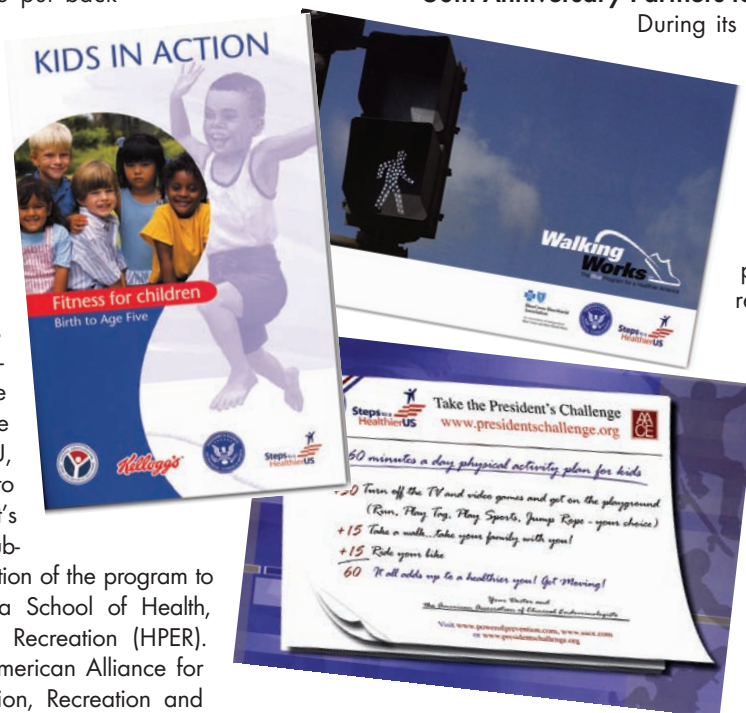
In July 2003, the PCPFS launched a new interactive Web site, [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org), to help Americans build a regular physical activity routine. The Web site tracks progress toward earning a PALA or for accumulating points toward a medal (Presidential Champions program). Children, teens, and adults, including seniors, can register free of charge as individuals or part of a group, choose from over 100 physical activities, and start tracking daily efforts in a personal log online or on paper (PALA only).

The interactive Web site at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) has allowed the President's Challenge program to establish an Advocates program of partners who continually promote physical activity encompassing the President's Challenge physical activity and fitness criteria. Challenge Advocates include corporate, medical, and nonprofit partners as well as partners in education and government.

### 50th Anniversary Partners to Get America Moving

During its 50th anniversary year, the PCPFS has reached out to individuals, groups, and organizations to become 50th Anniversary Partners to Get America Moving, established to honor past and present partners and to forge new relationships.

Fiftieth Anniversary Partners pledge to work with the PCPFS to "move the meter" toward a healthier America. Partners include individuals, professional societies, private corporations, not-for-profits, and other organizations that support physical activity, fitness, or sports; that have the potential for significant societal impact; that either target the nation as a



**Partners such as Kellogg's, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists work with the Council to develop and distribute free public information materials.**

whole or specialize in targeting under-represented groups in promoting positive health behaviors; that disseminate materials free of charge; and that do not endorse unhealthy behaviors or products.

"There's an awful lot going on for our 50th anniversary," Spain notes. "I think, basically, we have to think beyond obesity and overweight. We have to focus on developing healthier habits for a healthier United States."





## SOME OF THE COUNCIL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTNERS TO GET AMERICA MOVING

AARP  
 Action for Healthy Kids  
 Administration on Aging  
 Afterschool Alliance  
 After-School All-Stars Chicago  
 Alaska ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Alphabet Fitness  
 Always Play Fair, LLC  
 America On The Move; Discovery Education; PepsiCo  
 American Academy of Family Physicians  
 American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
 American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation  
 and Dance  
 American Association for Physical Activity & Recreation  
 American Chiropractic Association  
 American College of Sports Medicine  
 American Council for Fitness and Nutrition  
 American Hiking Society  
 American Public Health Association  
 Aquatic Exercise Association  
 Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute, Inc.  
 Arlington Cooperation Foundation  
 BabyPro  
 Balance First  
 Be Active North Carolina, Inc.  
 Better Your Body  
 Beyond Excellence  
 Big Sur International Marathon Just Run Program  
 Boy Scouts of America - Tussahaw District  
 Brand Building Entertainment  
 Building Better Health/Home Depot/Active for Life  
 Butterfield Trail Village  
 California Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports  
 Cardio Tennis  
 Cartoon Network's Get Animated Tour  
 Center for Healthy Aging  
 Center for the Promotion of Healthy  
 Lifestyles and Obesity Prevention at  
 California State University, Fullerton  
 Center for the Study of Aging, Inc.  
 Central States ACSM Regional Chapter  
 The Chamber of Flowood  
 CircusFit  
 Coast Guard Station St. Clair Shores  
 Colorado Governor's Council on Physical  
 Fitness "Shape Up Across Colorado"  
 Continuing Fitness, Inc.  
 Council for Family Health Education  
 Council of Chief State School Officers  
 Cub Scout Pack 469  
 Custer High School  
 Daisy Troop 313  
 Danville Public Schools  
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 Eldred Central School District  
 First Baptist Church of Salinas  
 Fit 4 Christ  
 FitbySara  
 F.I.T. Decisions  
 Fit For Life Inc.  
 The Fit Solution  
 Fitness for Lifestyle  
 Focused Fitness  
 Fresno Fitness  
 Functional Fitness 4 Kids, Inc. (FF4K)  
 Gajda Health Plus Network  
 Georgia State House General Assembly  
 Greater Manchester Family YMCA  
 Greater New York ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Greater Progressive  
 Greater Washington Sports Alliance  
 Greencastle Civic League  
 Hapkido-USA, Inc.  
 Harrisburg Area YMCA  
 Health Concepts International, LLC  
 Health Quest  
 The Health Science Charter School  
 HOPSports Inc.  
 Indiana Governor's Council for Physical Fitness and Sports  
 International Council on Active Aging  
 International Food Information Council Foundation  
 International Mountain Bicycling Association  
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### **Alphabet Fitness**



Photo courtesy of Alphabet Fitness



It's Your Thing  
 Jersey Shore Area YMCA  
 John Stanford, Jr.  
 JumpStart Youth Fitness  
 JumpStart Youth Fitness Endowment Foundation  
 Kids Fitness Challenge  
 Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers  
 Laurent's Ya-La Workout Creator  
 Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition  
 Lyndon State College Department of Exercise Science  
 Major League Soccer  
 Marine Corps Marathon  
 Martial Artist Foundation  
 Medical Fitness Association  
 Mid-Atlantic ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Midwest ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Miss Southeast Arizona 2006  
 MW Associates  
 National Association for Girls and Women in Sport  
 National Association for Sport and Physical Education  
 National Dance Association  
 National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
 NASA, Johnson Space Center Human Health and  
 Performance Education and Outreach Team  
 National Middle School Association  
 NASA Physical Fitness Center  
 National Blueprint Association  
 NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging  
 National Strength and Conditioning Association  
 National Trails Day  
 New England ACSM Regional Chapter  
 New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services  
 Northland ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Northwest ACSM Regional Chapter  
 No Sweat Fitness  
 PE Central  
 PeopleFit USA  
 Potomac Valley Track Club  
 Power of Prevention through Fitness and Nutrition  
 Powergrid Fitness  
 Prevention Research Centers  
 The Prevention Research Center at Tulane University  
 The Prevention Research Center of Michigan  
 Project ACES  
 Quick Fit Products, LLC  
 Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
 Research Consortium/AAHPERD  
 Rocky Mountain ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Run2Far.com  
 Safe Routes to School National Partnership  
 San Diego Martial Arts After School Program (MAAS)  
 Senior Fitness Productions  
 Silverback Fitness  
 SilverSneakers Fitness Program  
 SIRC: Sport Research Intelligence Sportive  
 SnowSports Industries

Soccer Players Association  
 Sound Body Sound Mind  
 Southeast ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Southwest ACSM Regional Chapter  
 Sports Academy LLC  
 St. Lawrence County Health Initiative, Inc.  
 The St. Louis Rams  
 Steps Across America  
 Susan E.B. Schwartz  
 Texas ACSM Regional Chapter  
 THERA-BAND The First Step to Active Health  
 Therapeutic & Wellness Specialists, LLC  
 Tinsley Chiropractic  
 Tom Walsh - corner2corner  
 Toyota Carlsbad and Lexus Carlsbad  
 TV-Turnoff Network  
 University of Oklahoma Prevention Research Center  
 USATF Potomac Valley Division of Long Distance Running  
 Utah Council for Worksite Health Promotion  
 Ventura Unified School District  
 Virginia Is for Education, Inc.  
 Watson's It's Never too Late  
 WeeCreation LLC  
 Wellness4Life  
 Winter Feels Good Campaign  
 Women's Sports Foundation  
 YMCA of Pawtucket, RI  
 The Yomenco Project  
 Youth Health and Wellness Initiative



Winter Trails Day, SnowSports Industries America





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 Allstate Life Insurance Company  
 Alphabet Fitness  
 Amateur Athletic Union  
 America On The Move  
 American Academy of Family Physicians  
 American Academy of Pediatrics  
 American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance  
 American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
 American College of Sports Medicine  
 American Council on Exercise  
 American Dairy Association  
 American Dairy Council  
 American Dietetic Association  
 American Heart Association  
 American Medical Association  
 American Orthopaedic Society  
 American Osteopathic Association  
 American Red Cross  
 American Tennis Industry Federation  
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 ARCO  
 Association for Worksite Health Promotion  
 Athletic Institute  
 Atlas Van Lines  
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 Bonnie Bell  
 Boy Scouts of America  
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 Bristol-Myers  
 Bulova Watch  
 Burger King  
 Burger King Corporation  
 California Chamber of Commerce  
 California Raisin Advisory Board  
 Campbell Soup Company  
 Capitol Records

Cardio Tennis  
 Carnation  
 CBS  
 Champion Products  
 Children's National Medical Center  
 CircusFit  
 Coca-Cola  
 Congressional Fitness Caucus  
 Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance  
 Consolidated  
 Conway Medical Center  
 Cooper Institute  
 Corporation for National & Community Service  
 Datsun  
 DC Healthy Families 2003  
 Diabetes & Wellness Foundation  
 Dietary Guidelines Alliance  
 Discovery  
 Disney Productions  
 District of Columbia Mayor's Office  
 Diversified Products  
 Dr. Scholl's  
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 Eastman Kodak  
 Equitable Life Insurance  
 ESPN  
 F.I.T. Decisions Foundation  
 Fitness Products Council  
 FlagHouse  
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 International Materials  
 Jazzercise  
 JC Penney  
 Jhoon Rhee Martial Arts Institute  
 Kalos Kagathos Foundation  
 Kellogg's  
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 Kiwanis International  
 Kraft Foods  
 L & T Health and Fitness  
 Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers  
 Life Sports Foundation  
 Lifetime Sports Foundation  
 Lockheed Missiles and Space Company  
 Major League Baseball  
 Marine Corps Marathon  
 Mars, Inc.  
 McDonald's



Photos courtesy of Coca-Cola



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 Metropolitan YMCA  
 Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company  
 Monroe County Community School Corporation  
 Montgomery Ward  
 Motorola Marathon  
 Mott Foundation  
 Mountain Dew  
 NASA  
 National 4-H  
 National Alliance for Youth Sports  
 National Association for Health and Fitness  
 National Association for Sport and Physical Education  
 National Athletic Trainers' Association  
 National Car Rental  
 National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity  
 National Council on Aging  
 National Defense University  
 National Discount Marketing  
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 SnowSports Industries America  
 Soccer for Everyone, Inc.  
 Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation  
 Special Olympics  
 Sporting Good Manufacturer's Association  
 Standard Brands, Inc.  
 State Governors' Councils on Physical Fitness and Sports  
 Sugar Association  
 Sunkist Growers, Inc.  
 Tennis Magazine  
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 Toyota Motor Corporation  
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U.S. Army  
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**National Strength and Conditioning Association**



PCPFS photo





# SCIENCE

## of the President's Council on

### Experts Arm Council Members

### with Best Data/Practices

*by Barbara Stahura*

**F**rom magazines to infomercials, Americans are bombarded with messages from fitness experts recommending various ways to exercise and become physically fit. Many people interested in learning about this important topic are understandably perplexed about what it really takes to live an active, healthy lifestyle. How much physical activity is enough? Do we have to run marathons, lift weights, or bicycle for hours each week? Or is a brisk walk once in a while enough? Are "six-pack abs" necessary for health? Or is it okay to settle for a small spare tire as long as you keep moving?

As a federal advisory committee, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) is called on to make recommendations to the president through the secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) about ways to help Americans become active and fit. The Council members are often well-known celebrity athletes such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Lynn Swann, or professional fitness media personalities like Denise Austin. The Council also consists of executives from business, the fitness industry, non-profit organizations, and education.

Since Council members are sought-after speakers invited to give presentations about physical activity, fitness, and sports around the country, they need to know that the recommendations they are providing to government leaders and the information they are offering the American people is the best available.

The Council relies on its own panel of experts, the members of the Science Board of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, to keep them abreast of the latest science on all aspects of physical activity and fitness. Science Board members are nominated by their peers and approved by the PCPFS executive director on the basis of their scholarly qualifications and contributions to the science of physical activity, fitness, health, and sports. Based around the United States, they meet once a year in Washington, D.C., confer in regular conference calls, and are available to the PCPFS to answer questions, review presentations for accuracy, and examine new programs.

Since its founding in 1956, the Council has always had volunteer advisors and consultants, such as cardiologists and specialists in sports medicine, according to Christine Spain, PCPFS



# BOARD

## Physical Fitness and Sports

director of Research, Planning and Special Projects. "There has always been a network of people we could count on. We are a small administrative office. Having experts as an integral part of our initiatives has been an ideal way to reach out to organizations and get them involved with our work."

Over the past 50 years, the science of exercise and fitness has developed and expanded, particularly after 1970, when research began to evolve so rapidly that the PCPFS decided to develop methods to evaluate the accuracy of the health and fitness information it receives from so many different sources. Based on recommendations in the early 1990s, an informal task force of scientists from appropriate fields was created to assist the PCPFS. This informal group eventually evolved into the Science Board, created in 2003.

Like the Council members, all Science Board members donate their time. They function as a subcommittee reporting to the executive director. The Science Board members' areas of expertise are wide-ranging, from kinesiology (the study of the mechanics of body movement) to the sociology of sports, including human-rights issues; from strategic planning for physical fitness to training physical education teachers; from quality-of-life issues involved in physical activity to interventions for specific populations, designed to get them moving for their health's sake.

Charles Corbin, Ph.D., was the first chair of the Science Board, in 2003-04. He has been involved with the PCPFS since the 1960s, when, as a young college professor, he traveled around

the country to present exercise and fitness clinics for the PCPFS and to train physical education teachers.

"Our job is not to do research [for the PCPFS] but to review the things that come through the President's Council and make sure that scholars can validate them," he explains.

Under his leadership, the Science Board developed policy and operating codes for its committees and created a systematic review process for PCPFS policies and procedures. In one of those reviews, they examined the plans for the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) ([www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)) and created its online reference guide. Other recommendations will be forthcoming in 2006, Corbin says, including the results of a review of performance-based fitness tests (agility, balance, coordination, power, reaction time, and speed) vs. health-related fitness tests (which measure cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition).

The purpose of the Science Board is "essentially to provide scientific oversight and advice to the President's Council," says Ed Howley, Ph.D., current Science Board chair. "When they need input, we can do it, or we can recruit our colleagues."

A good way to appreciate the value the Science Board brings to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is to consider the expertise and accomplishments of the 2006 Science Board, serving during the year of the 50th anniversary of the PCPFS.





# 2006 Science Board of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

- **Barbara Ainsworth, Ph.D.**

Dr. Ainsworth is the principal investigator (PI) for the California Dept. of Education's research on physical activity and academic achievement, the co-PI at the San Diego Prevention Research Center, and a professor at San Diego State University. Her research has focused on physical activity measurement and reporting.



- **Doris Corbett, Ph.D.**

A sociologist with expertise in human-rights issues and ethnic and gender issues in sport, Doris Corbett has closely studied "the ways in which physical activity/exercise and sport is related to the larger society," she says.

For instance, she explains that "health and fitness are human-rights issues, and minority groups suffer and are affected the most," even to the point that the "fitness and exercise industry ignores the working class and poor American people because of the perceived limited revenue potential."

Furthermore, the deeper issues behind why people do and do not exercise are complex. It's not just enough to tell them to get active for their health. To create the right messages and programs, says Corbett, we need to know "how physical activity and exercise is integrated into society, the personal meanings associated with

exercise, what economic and political forces impact on the exercise experience to enhance inclusion, and cooperation in pursuit of health and fitness for all diverse cultures in the American society."

- **Ed Howley, Ph.D. (current chair, 2006)**

As a professor of exercise science, Ed Howley conducts research in the areas of metabolic responses to exercise, assessment of cardio-respiratory fitness, and the role of physical activity in preventing weight gain.

During his year as Science Board chair, Howley says the board will conduct a systematic review of the youth fitness tests available from different organizations – some of which emphasize performance, while others stress health-related measures. Despite their differences, both offer value, he says. "Health-related fitness has clear health benefits, but if you push it outward a little, it acts as a base to move toward sports-related fitness," he explains.

While much of the fitness emphasis in the United States is currently directed toward reducing rates of obesity, Howley praises the PCPFS for promoting physical activity for everyone. "If obesity was not a problem, would there be any reason for people to be physically active?" he asks. "Definitely yes. There is an absolute need for people to be fit for heart health."



- **Robert Karch, Ed.D.**

Chair of the Department of Health and Fitness at American University in Washington, D.C., Robert Karch helped develop the master's program in health promotion management there in 1980. By integrating the business, science, and art of health promotion, this program produces, he says, "a hybrid – a person who understands the business side of fitness and exercise to be able to run these programs as a business."

One major area of his expertise is strategic planning for physical fitness, and he has created this kind of program for U.S. military forces and for many businesses.



While strategic planning is not often linked with physical fitness, Karch explains that it is simply “putting together all the essential principles for a successful outcome. How do you conceptualize programs appropriate for people that you serve and meet their needs?”

Such an approach is helpful to the PCPFS as the nation examines its problems with obesity, hypertension, and the early onset of diabetes. “We know it’s important to exercise and eat well,” he says, “but we’re not doing them. That will be changed through appropriate planning for the population.”

### • Amelia Lee, Ph.D.

With a concentration on teaching and teacher education, specifically applied to promoting physical activity in school settings, Amelia Lee chairs the Department of Kinesiology at Louisiana State University. She says it’s been a mistake to cut back or eliminate physical education in schools. In order to change that, “we must provide research-based evidence that physical education can influence physical activity behavior,” she explains, “and when we can do that, we will get support for our programs.”



Many school P.E. programs revolve around sports, which discourages many children who can’t succeed in those activities. Instead, Lee offers, schools should provide programs that “prepare children to live physically active and healthy lives.” And, while she says there is clear evidence that kids in general today are not less fit than they used to be, obesity is a problem. To reverse that trend, “the key is to provide programs for children that will generate interest and build self-confidence. Teachers should provide challenge, promote creativity and problem solving, and focus on learning,” she says. “Teachers must try to influence food choices, develop good eating behaviors, and make students aware of the relationship between eating habits, physical activity levels, and overall health.”

### • Tedd Mitchell, M.D.

The only physician on the Science Board, Tedd Mitchell is the president and medical director of the prestigious Cooper Clinic. He has an extensive research background, with a focus on maintaining health and preventing disease through physical fitness and proper dietary habits. He is the only member of the Science Board to also be a member of the PCPFS, appointed by President Bush in 2001. He describes the PCPFS as “a resource to go to for information as well as a marketing

tool to promote physical activity among the population.”

With his medical training as well as his extensive background in research, he has a unique perspective within the PCPFS that allows him to act in the capacity of liaison between the two groups. “I attend Science Board meetings as a fly on the wall just to listen,” he says, “and then I condense the information to present later to the President’s Council.”

### • James Morrow, Ph.D. (2004-05 chair)

A researcher of fitness testing, physical activity, and physical fitness as they relate to quality of life and health, James Morrow says too many people have rejected physical activity because of confusing messages.

“Someone says you have to be at this heart rate or this intensity, or that you have to engage in two hours of activity a day. I just saw something that says you have to walk 35 miles to lose one pound!” he says with exasperation clear in his voice. “So people say, ‘I’d rather just eat and get fat.’”

Even the word “exercise” has taken on a negative connotation, he explains, with its images of sweat and struggle. That’s why he’s happy the PCPFS is instead promoting “physical activity” as a way to get fit, in a simple message about moving around at a moderate pace for only 30 minutes a day. The idea is to “encourage people to modify their current behaviors, and that will affect their quality of life, morbidity, and mortality.”

And that prescription to walk 35 miles? Instead, he says, “If I just walk an extra seven to 10 minutes a day and reduce my caloric intake by one Oreo a day, in a year, I’ll have lost 10 pounds.”







- **Robert Pangrazi, Ph.D.**

A consultant for Gopher Sport and Walk4Life, Robert Pangrazi is professor emeritus at Arizona State University. He has focused his research and teaching on promoting activity for youth, and he has been extensively involved in curriculum development and instruction in physical activity and education. The widely used *Dynamic Physical Education for Elementary School Children* is one of the 42 textbooks he has written; it is currently in its 14th edition. Among the features that make it so popular



are a realistic approach that helps physical education teachers cope better during a time of changing school policies as well as game modification that encourages inclusiveness, eliminates isolation, and promotes cooperative learning and teamwork. It is this kind of approach that reduces the possibility of children rejecting physical activity later in life due to bad experiences during PE classes.



- **Russell Pate, Ph.D.**

A professor of exercise science, Russell Pate is most interested in physical activity and fitness in children and the health implications of physical activity. He says there is no one deterrent to physical activity among kids today – a problem in itself because there’s no easy remedy.

Even though many schools have cut back on P.E. programs, Pate says they can still promote physical activity during the school day by “maintaining or expanding recess, expanding and diversifying intramural and interscholastic sports programs, actively linking students to community-based after-school activity programs, including physical activity classroom learning activities, and promoting active transport to and from school.”

One area of his current study: What kind of condition are kids really in today?

“Our surveillance systems for monitoring population trends in physical activity and fitness in kids are extremely inadequate,” he says. “Consequently we really do not know if today’s kids are less active and fit than those of previous generations. The rising prevalence of overweight in American youth strongly suggests that kids are less active today, but direct evidence is very limited.”

- **Deborah Young, Ph.D., Chair-elect**

Getting people off the couch and outdoors for a walk to improve their physical fitness is not as simple as it sounds, says Deborah Young. For one thing, in some neighborhoods it’s not safe to be outside. For another, if someone doesn’t mind having a higher weight and sees weight loss as the only reason to take a walk, then there’s not much motivation.

Young is a physical activity epidemiologist who studies behaviors around physical activity and designs interventions, particularly for African-American women and adolescent girls, to help them become more physically active.

For instance, she says, African-American women prefer to combine physical activity with socializing, so having an exercise buddy or group, with time for chatting included, is very important. Additionally, unlike behaviors such as seat-belt use or not smoking, being physically active has not yet become a social norm, “so we go to lunch instead of walking,” says Young. When non-smoking became public policy, the number of smokers fell dramatically. Perhaps we need to take the same approach with physical activity, explains Young, if we want everyone to engage in it.

- **Maureen Weiss, Ph.D.**

Dr. Weiss is a professor in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Her teachings and research focus on the psychological and social development of children and adolescents through participation in sports and physical activity.

- **Weimo Zhu, Ph.D.**

As an associate professor of kinesiology, Weimo Zhu studies body movement and physical activity. In one of his recent projects, he used GPS equipment and activity monitoring to study people’s “physical activity space,” which is defined as “the area or space where an individual spends time and engages in physical activity.” He





studied not only the activity of walking but also the subjects' interaction with the environment as they walked. This is important in an era when the built environment is often not conducive to outdoor activities. When there are no sidewalks or other safe places to walk or play, for instance, people are less likely to be active outdoors.

In his first year on the Science Board, Zhu plans to make a strong case for regular testing and surveying of youth fitness, which has not been done in the United States since 1985; for developing a testing manual for fitness tests, since there is no technical manual for their validity and reliability; and for examining the current testing standards "both philosophically and technically," since the old norms come from the 1985 test and may no longer be the norms today, considering the current obesity problems among children.

## Past Members



• **Charles Corbin, Ph.D. (chair 2003-04)**

Dr. Charles Corbin's work has focused on how to be fit for life, beginning with teaching children and young adults how to make good decisions about their own health and wellness. He is the author of three textbooks: *Concepts for Physical Fitness*, *Fitness for Life*, and *Concepts of Fitness and Wellness*.

Corbin has helped promote the shift from fitness tests based solely on performance to those based on health-related issues. "In the '50s, there was more emphasis on being good at sports and performance," he says. "Until various studies came out, we didn't learn that health fitness is what makes the difference over the life span and that fitness is a product of a healthy lifestyle focused on activity."

Although athletics are important for many people, "we must move away from the elitist model that produces athletes," he says. "Everybody can benefit from a focus on

healthy activity for a lifetime in a very personal way. My goal is to get people to enjoy physical activity, because fitness will follow."

• **Margaret J. Safrit, Ph.D.**

Dr. Safrit served as a measurement specialist on the Science Board. She spent the major portion of her career at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where she did research to study practical and theoretical issues in measuring motor behavior, developed a graduate program in measurement, and established one of the first measurement laboratories in the United States.



## HONOR AWARDS

The PCPFS Honor Award is given annually to an individual who has made a major contribution to the advancement and promotion of the science of physical activity, in addition to being an advocate of the mission of the PCPFS. Award winners are:

**2003**

B. Don Franks, Ph.D.\*  
Margaret (Jo) Safrit, Ph.D.  
Charles Corbin, Ph.D.  
Robert Pangrazi, Ph.D.  
Wynn Updike, Ph.D.

**2004**

Steven Blair, P.E.D.

**2005**

Timothy Lohman, Ph.D.

**2006**

Sharon Plowman, Ph.D.

\*Don Franks served as Senior Program Advisor to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports from 1995-2005.



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