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Photo: Participants of Fit and Strong!

Texercise & Fit and Strong! Programs in the Brazos Valley

Fall-related injuries are a major public health problem. Nationally, every 15 seconds an older adult is treated in an emergency department for a fall-related injury. And every 29 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall. In Texas alone, the annual medical costs for falls is approaching \$2 billion with an average hospital charge of over \$35,000 per person hospitalized for a fall. While the causes of falls are multifactorial, physical functioning is a key risk factor, and thus evidence-based physical activity programs for seniors are a wise investment. In collaboration with the Center for Community Health Development, the Program on Aging at the School of Rural Public Health has implemented a variety of falls-risk reduction physical activity programs.

Our two newest programs being rolled out in the Brazos Valley are "Fit and Strong!" and "Texercise." Dr. Ory, Director of the Program on Healthy Aging, indicates "these programs are unique in several ways. Not only do they help motivate seniors to be more active as well as teach them the skills to exercise safely, they also focus on building local capacity to deliver the program through lay-led facilitators." With

a mini-grant from the Community Research Senior Center for Senior Health and additional funding from St. Joseph's Healthy Communities, the Brazos Valley Area Agency on Aging has partnered with the School of Rural Public Health to deliver Fit and Strong! to seniors in the Brazos Valley including College Station, Bryan, and three rural sites: Navasota, Madisonville, and Hilltop Lakes. As indicated by Cindy Quinn, Evidence-Based Program Coordinator, "we are delighted to have programs being delivered in our more rural counties and hope to see sustainability on the local level". Participants have enjoyed the classes and are benefitting from a free opportunity to engage in physical activity with other senior participants. For more information on Fit and Strong contact Cindy Quinn, Evidence-Based Coordinator.

With a grant from the Texas State Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Program on Healthy Aging is partnering with Scott and White HealthCare to help restructure Texercise into a 10 week program that focuses on both physical activity and nutrition. This new

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program structure will be pilot tested in sites in Central, North, and East Texas with the goal of holding 16 classes and reaching at least 350 seniors over the next six months. Training materials have been developed and facilitators trained at the Brazos Valley Council of Government Training Center on February 19, 2013. Doris Howell, local Texercise Program Manager, states "We are excited about this opportunity to build on the existing success of the Texercise program towards an evidence-based lay-led facilitator model. We anticipate this translation will provide even more opportunities for older Texans to engage in physical activity and healthy aging activities." For more information on Texercise contact Doris Howell at 979-458-8099 or dhowell@srph.tamhsc.edu.

These two activities are part of a new fall-risk free initiative being directed by the School of Rural Public Health in collaboration with the Texas AgriLife Extension Agency. According to Dr. Ory, "these types of programs will be central to the School's proposed Evidence-Based Program Resource Exchange on Training, Implementation and Evaluation of Evidence-based Self-Management and Wellness Programs that is part of the new Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program.

Leon County Physical Activity and Community Engagement Cache Dash Kickoff Event



Participants of the Cache Dash record their findings

The Leon County Physical Activity and Community Engagement (PACE) Project Workgroup hosted the first annual Leon County Cache Dash Kickoff Event on Saturday, February 23rd at Fort Boggy State Park in Centerville, Texas. The kickoff launched a four-week competition for residents across Leon County to see who can find the most hidden "caches," or treasure. This activity is commonly referred to as *geocaching*. The event featured a Geocaching 101 Training and took residents on their first cache hunt. The Leon County Cache Dash provides participants with a set of coordinates for hidden caches within the county. Participants record the number of caches they find in a passport and after the four-week challenge, residents who turn their completed passports will receive a prize.

The Cache Dash is the first of four locally designed initiatives to increase access to physical activity in rural communities, as part of the PACE Project. The PACE Project is the result of a collaboration between the Brazos Valley Health Partnership (BVHP) and the Center for Community Health Development (CCHD).



A Global Positioning System (GPS) being used to locate "caches"

Drs. McLeroy and Ory Recognized as Distinguished Professors

Two of the Center for Community Health Development's (CCHD) own have been recognized as Distinguished Professors by the Texas A&M Health Science Center, the most significant award given for outstanding research and scholarship within the Texas A&M University



System. This award is given to those faculty members who are seen amongst their peers as foremost world authorities and for making significant contributions to their field of study.

Dr. McLeroy is a Regents Professor of Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences and currently serves as the Principal Investigator (PI) for CCHD and previously served as the PI for the Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities. He is well known for applying social ecology to health promotion and public health, as well as his work on community-based interventions and program evaluation.

Dr. Ory is a Regents Professor of Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences, with an adjunct professorship in the Department of Statistics at Texas A&M University. She currently serves as the Director of the Program on Healthy Aging as well as the principal investigator of three of CCHD's Special Interest Projects: CTxCARES (Communities of Texas – Cancer • Activity • Research • Education • Support), Evidence-Based Falls Prevention and National Falls Prevention Evaluation. In these roles, Dr. Ory has made substantial contributions to identifying factors associated with healthy aging, as well as implementing and disseminating evidence-based programs for improving the health and functioning of older adults.

Please join us in congratulating both Dr. McLeroy and Dr. Ory for this distinguished honor and recognition.



CCHD Welcomes New Student Worker



Holly Rine is a freshman Communication major from Gulf Breeze, Florida. She was born and raised an Aggie and is proud to now call Aggieland her home. During her first year at Texas A&M, she has had the opportunity to become very involved on campus including joining Traditions Council, the Leadership Living Learning Community, and Kappa Delta sorority. In her spare time, she enjoys being outside, watching *Friday Night Lights*, and crafting. Holly is very excited to be working with the Center for Community Health and Development and can't wait to see what her time at Texas A&M has in store.



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Clothing Drive to Benefit South Texas Residents

The Program for Research in Nutrition and Health Disparities, led by Dr. Joseph

Sharkey, has partnered with Healthy Food & Healthy People in South Texas

Colonias and Building Healthier Border Communities to hold a clothing drive to

benefit the residents in South Texas *colonias*. They are collecting gently used

clothing items and shoes for children and adults. To donate, you may drop off

your items in Suite 123 in the School of Rural Public Health Administration

Building or contact the program by calling (979) 845-5790.

