

January 9, 2007

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Dear Neal:

Thank you for taking my call today. I appreciate your support for the many initiatives that the City of Houston is taking to make a truly meaningful impact on the health and wellness of those who live and work in the Greater Houston area. Here are some of the highlights of our Get Moving Houston program that was launched by Mayor Bill White in January, 2005:

1. The Houston Wellness Association was spawned by the Mayor's Wellness Council in December 2006 to institutionalize the wellness movement in Houston. This association has brought together major companies from a broad cross-section of the business community with a shared interest in prevention and improving the health and wellness of the entire city.

The following companies signed on as \$25,000 Founding Corporate Sponsors:

- Minute Maid
- Cigna
- Halliburton
- Memorial Hermann Hospital System
- Kelsey-Seybold
- Wal Mart
- Texas Children's Hospital
- Westside Tennis & Fitness
- The Houston Astros

A "launch party" was held at Minute Maid Stadium (home of the Houston Astros) on December 5, 2006 and several hundred people turned out on a cold Houston night to listen to the Mayor, the owner of the Astros and a few representatives of these Founding Partners explained the vision for this new wellness trade association.

We believe this is the first of its kind in the nation on this scale and we intend to make this a model for collaboration for all major cities in the U.S. The evening of the event, we signed up 40 additional small business and individual members and the association already number over 75 companies! We anticipate 300 companies and individuals becoming members in the next 12 months.

The new board of directors met January 5 for a strategic planning retreat and the new association is off and running.

We intend to hold monthly networking events, quarterly educational events, an annual health & wellness expo for the entire city, a quarterly publication focused on wellness “Best Practices” and a growing data base of wellness businesses and activists dedicated to this important cause.

The HWA will also devote a significant amount of its financial and human resources to supporting the efforts of the Mayor’s Wellness Council community initiatives to fight obesity and other critical health issues.

2. Houston’s major endurance events and most of the other smaller events achieved enviable gains in participation in 2006 over 2005. The Chevron Houston Marathon, Half Marathon, Family 5 K and One Mile Children’s Fun Run (January 13-14) sold out all available entry spots for both ’06 and this year in ’07 with over 15,000 total participants.

Houston also participated in the International Challenge Day in May, ’06 sponsored by a group from Brazil. Cities worldwide were encouraged to get as many of their citizens to exercise for at least 15 minutes that day and report their participation. Houston had over 500,000 people participate that day!

3. Houston’s City Council approved making the City “smoke-free” in all public places, including all restaurants in 2006. Now, it is illegal to light up in bars, outdoor eating areas or covered transportation areas.
4. Houston experienced a huge influx of the fitness company chains, including Lifetime Fitness, LA Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness, Curves, Anytime Fitness, Sound Fitness, etc. in the past two years. From a work site health perspective, several of the major corporate wellness management organizations began working with large corporate clients in 2006, including Health Fitness Corporation, Medifit, Plus 1, and Elite Wellness.
5. The Mayor’s Wellness Council established six committees/task forces to focus on specific initiatives for 2007. These include:
 - Childhood Obesity Task Force
 - Work Site Health Promotion

- Senior Fitness
- Events
- Public Policy
- Medical Advisory Board
- Communications Committee

The Wellness Council has decided to develop our own “scorecard” for measuring our progress with respect to each of these committees so we can prove that we are making a difference in the coming months and years.

6. Houston has been declared an “Affiliate City” by Governor Perry to join Austin in the Texas Round Up activity tracking program for 2007. This program encourages citizens across the state to exercise daily for six consecutive weeks and earn a certificate of recognition from the Governor.

At the completion of the six week program, which ends in April, the participating cities hold their own 10K or 5K events to celebrate their commitment to practicing healthier lifestyle habits. Houston finished second in total participation (to Austin) last year.

7. The Mayor’s “Safe Clear” program (ensuring that accidents and flat tires, etc. are cleared from traffic lanes almost immediately) and coordinated traffic signals have both contributed enormously to reducing commute times in Houston over the past few years.
8. The City of Houston municipal employees have embarked on an ambitious employee wellness program, headed by departmental wellness committees. The City has also allocated funding to hire a full time employee wellness director during 2007.
9. The State of Texas has mandated a minimum of 150 minutes per week of physical activity, removal of junk food from vending machines and more nutritional meals in school cafeterias.
10. The Governor of Texas in October initiated a Texas Coalition for Worksite Wellness and there were many representatives from the Houston area in support of this effort. The website is www.txworksitewellness.org
11. M. D. Anderson in December was recognized by the CEO Roundtable on Cancer as the first NCI Cancer Center and first health care system in the country to receive CEO Cancer Gold Standard accreditation. There are 12 companies now in the country that have received this recognition.

There are many other City and County wellness initiatives on a smaller scale, but hopefully this will give you a better perspective on just how committed the city has become around community health and wellness.

Please call me if you would like to discuss these activities in greater depth.

Sincerely,

Herb Lipsman
Chairman
The Mayor's Wellness Council
City of Houston