

Maryland SHIP "Health Action" Newsletter

May 3, 2013

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Weight Loss Challenge: Big Results for the City of Gaithersburg



Gaithersburg

A CHARACTER COUNTS! CITY

The City of Gaithersburg was recently honored as the latest Healthiest Maryland Businesses (HMB) success story. Their workplace wellness success is a great example of how one simple, low-cost strategy can make a big impact on employee health. Over

the past year and a half, the Montgomery County municipality hosted a series of three, 12-week, 'Biggest Loser'-style weight loss challenges to encourage employees to lose pounds while adopting a healthier lifestyle. Participants competed in teams as well as individually. After each weekly weigh-in, a spreadsheet was distributed to all participants showing each team's total combined lost pounds, as well as percentage of total weight lost. The winning team was highlighted and announced.

The winning individual from each challenge took home a cash prize and received three paid days off. The winning teams received one paid day off. The challenges were a popular activity--nearly 25 percent of the City's employees participated in one of the three 12-week competitions. As a result of participating in the challenges, participants reported lower blood pressure, increased energy and the desire to keep their healthy new lifestyles. It was a good way to keep the weight loss process fresh and exciting, as well as retain interest and encourage participation. Moreover, the challenges boosted employee morale and brought about friendly competition.

Click [here](#) to read the full HMB Success Story.

View the [SHIP measure](#) and [tools](#) for increasing the proportion of adults who are at a healthy weight.

School-Based Health Centers Emerge as Resources for Dropout Prevention

There is an emerging movement around the country to position school-based health centers (SBHC) as primary resources for dropout prevention, academic improvement, and high school graduation, all key determinants of lifetime health. Research consistently shows that education has a significant impact on behavior, lifestyle choices, income, and ultimately, health status. Studies have found a positive association between low to moderate use of school-based health centers and declines in dropout, especially among students at high risk.



The APHA's Center for School, Health and Education recently launched a two-year pilot project in partnership with a SBHC in Detroit. Health center staff will use a specialized assessment tool to measure the health and social needs of all students. The confidential assessment not only asks about typical health-related issues such as sexual behavior, but about social determinants such as homelessness, electricity shut-offs, and food insecurity. The resulting data will help health center staff connect students and their families to social services as well as influence school policy. For examples, if a considerable number of students report issues with utility shut-offs at home, the school may want to consider staying open late so students can complete their homework before heading home.

To read the full article, see page 8 of the May/June 2013 issue of The Nation's Health.

To learn more about school-based health centers, click [here](#).

View the [SHIP measure](#) and [tools](#) to increase the proportion of students who graduate high school.

Flu Vaccine Effectiveness Low Among Seniors



A CDC study found that this season's flu vaccine reduced the risk of illness by a half to two-thirds for most people but there was low effectiveness among seniors for the most common virus strain. Overall, the seasonal influenza vaccine reduced the risk for flu-related

medical visits by 56 percent. That effectiveness was consistent across all age groups except among people 65 and older. Among seniors, "little or no benefit" could be confirmed for the H3 strain.

Based on an analysis of about 2,700 children and adults, the study estimated the current vaccine was 47 percent effective against influenza A, or H3N2, infections and 67 percent effective against influenza B infections. Among people age 65 and older, the vaccine had a 27 percent effectiveness against flu-related medical visits overall and just 9 percent effectiveness against medical visits related to infection with influenza A. The majority of positive flu virus samples tested in the United States from Sept. 30, 2012 - Feb. 9, 2013, were influenza A. Despite variability across seasons and age groups, recommendations for annual vaccination still remain the same.

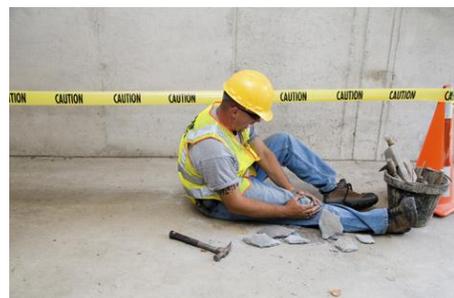
To read the full article, see page 9 of the May/June 2013 issue of The Nation's Health.

View the [SHIP measure](#) and [tools](#) to increase the percentage of individuals vaccinated annually against seasonal influenza.

Maryland Seeks to Stop Construction Falls With Awareness Campaign

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently teamed with the Montgomery County Worker Health and Safety Commission in Maryland to spread the word about preventing fatal falls in construction - the leading cause of death in the

industry. In March, an awareness campaign launched that featured posters on display in Montgomery County's public bus system. The posters aim to raise awareness about the hazards of working from heights in construction and the necessary steps to keep workers safe, such as using a harness and lines for roof



work. The posters carry such messages as "I worked construction for 10 years before my fall. It shattered my body and my livelihood."

To read the full article see page 22 of the May/June 2013 issue of The Nation's Health.

View the [SHIP measure](#) and [tools](#) to decrease fall-related deaths.

News from the Office of Primary Care

FCC Rural Health Care Connect Fund Webinar to be Hosted in Maryland

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH), Rural Maryland Council (RMC), and Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) are jointly hosting a webinar on May 21st from 2:00-3:00 pm on the upcoming Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Rural Health Care Connect Fund presented by Mark Walker of Wireline Competition Bureau of the FCC. The Fund will provide \$400 million annually with a goal to increase access to broadband for health care providers. To register for the webinar, click [here](#). For further information, click [here](#) to e-mail Taleah Parker.

2013 Rural Action Assembly, Hitting a Grand Slam for Rural Maryland: Creating a Unified Playbook for the Prosperity of Agriculture, Community, Economy, and Health

The Maryland State Office of Rural Health (SORH), the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) and the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) are collaborating to host a day and half conference on October 17-18, 2013 at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen, MD. The conference will focus on defining key issues for Maryland's rural communities. Through the integration of key rural stakeholders, we will work towards creating sustainable rural communities and plan for the future and prosperity of rural Maryland. Click [here](#) for more information.