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HMSA *go* Campaign launched at outdoor activity festival

Statewide awareness campaign promotes health benefits of physical activity

The Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) today launched a new public education campaign called “**go**” at an outdoor festival promoting the many benefits of physical activity. More than 3,000 residents, including hundreds of kids from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu and Boys & Girls Club of Hawaii, attended the **HMSA *go* Festival** at the University of Hawaii’s Les Murakami Stadium. Highlights included activity demonstrations and clinics provided by dozens of local clubs and organizations, as well as University of Hawaii athletes who were on hand to help encourage Hawaii’s youth to lead active lives.

The HMSA **go** campaign was designed to address one of the fastest growing health issues in the state – childhood and adult obesity. As reported by the American Public Health Association, more than 50 percent of adults in Hawaii are overweight or obese. The **go** campaign offers an interactive Web site available to the public and a subsidized Weight Watchers pilot program for qualified HMSA members. The campaign will also deliver messages through print ads and television and radio commercials that encourage residents of all ages to lead active lifestyles for better health.

“Studies show that inactive people are almost twice as likely to develop heart disease than people who are more active, and the combination of poor diet and physical inactivity is rapidly approaching tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death,” said Robert P. Hiam, president and chief executive officer of HMSA. “Of particular concern is the fact that, at 22 percent, the youth obesity rate in Hawaii is twice the national average,” he explained.

The HMSA **go** campaign is about getting up, getting out and getting active. Recent studies have shown that routine daily activity, apart from formal exercise, can contribute to better health.

“Small but sustained changes in activity level can positively impact a person’s health. Just getting off the couch, staying on your feet longer and moving around more can help you reach your health goals.” Hiam added. “Kids can play Frisbee, shoot hoops at the park or join a hula halau or other dance group at a local club. Adults who can’t make it to the gym can take the stairs, vacuum the carpet, rake the leaves, wash the car, swim with the kids or work in the garden.”

To this end, attendees of the **HMSA go Festival** were able to participate in dozens of games and activities, including everything from Frisbee throwing to rock wall climbing. Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann was on hand to help kick off the event that featured dozens of activities, including HMSA’s Fun 5 program.

The Fun 5 program is currently implemented at 72 of Hawaii’s after-school A+ programs and a number of elementary schools statewide. Created in conjunction with the University of Hawaii and Hawaii State Department of Education, Fun 5 is a comprehensive approach to physical activity and nutrition that weaves body movement and good health practices into everyday school routines. Kids at the festival played Fun 5 games such as “Houdini Hoops,” “Clean Your Room” and “Grab the Apple.”

Local television personality Kutmaster Spaz emceed the event, and shared his own motivating story about how his commitment to increased physical activity contributed to his significant weight loss and improved health. University of Hawaii Wahine volleyball team members, as well as men’s basketball and football players, also turned out to talk with kids and inspire the crowd with lively sports demonstrations. Hawaiian music favorites Ho‘onu‘a and Keahiwai provided entertainment at the conclusion of the event.

Interactive go Campaign Web site

A key element of the **go** campaign is the interactive Web site at www.HMSA.com/go. The site is full of information about physical activity, including a “calorie burn off” matrix that shows how much and what kind of physical activity a person needs to burn off calories for a variety of snack foods based on that person’s body weight. The site also features a stretching guide, physical activity safety tips, a statewide community calendar of events loaded with listings for various classes, seminars, activities and more.

Weight Watchers Pilot Program

As part of the **go** campaign, HMSA has also announced a pilot program offering qualifying HMSA members the opportunity to attend Weight Watchers for three months at no cost, along with free registration. Since 1963, Weight Watchers has helped million of members achieve sustainable weight loss.

“Weight Watchers knows that small changes to your life can mean big changes to your weight,” said Kelly Giles, general manager of Weight Watchers in Hawaii. “Weight Watchers is a scientifically-designed approach to weight management that incorporates healthful eating, physical activity, behavior modification and support to help people lose weight safely, sensibly and effectively.”

The pilot program is designed for current HMSA members who qualify, and who are not presently participating in the Weight Watchers program. Eligibility will be determined when members complete a simple health assessment at an HMSA HealthPass office. Qualifying members may choose to attend traditional Weight Watchers meetings in their neighborhood or may sign up for the Weight Watchers Online program, which offers a variety of interactive weight-loss tools to help manage daily food choices and activities, including daily tips and connection to the Weight Watchers Online community. For more information on the Weight Watchers pilot program, call HealthPass at 948-6456 on Oahu, or 1 800 525-6548 from the Neighbor Islands.

HMSA is a nonprofit, mutual benefit association founded in Hawaii in 1938. It is a member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans. HMSA is the most experienced provider of health care coverage in the state. Nationally, HMSA and 39 other independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans provide worldwide coverage to more than 91 million members.

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