



COLUMBUS CITY COUNCIL

TAVARES TIMES NEWS

From the Office of Councilmember Charleta B. Tavares

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Dear Community Resident

We are fortunate to live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but, as it has been widely reported, the overall health of our population does not mirror this affluence. Further, the upcoming generation may be the first in U.S. history to be worse off with respect to health than their parents, in large part due to unhealthy eating and sedentary lifestyles.

Many factors contribute to this alarming fact: Parents need to work more hours to pay for the necessities and have less time at home with their children, the increasing number of uninsured Americans, the rising cost of healthcare, and the choice of many to opt for fast food over a well-balanced meal.

As we begin the count down to the first day of Spring, it is a good time for us to make a commitment to do all we can to live a healthier life.

The City of Columbus continues its commitment to help improve the health of our community. Over the past year my office has sponsored numerous pieces of legislation, including many that support the work of the Columbus Public Health Department and the neighborhood health centers—both invaluable resources for our community.

This month's *Tavares Times News* highlight's some of the work being done in our community and the lives being changed—some will inspire, others will inform. I encourage everyone to invest in a healthy



Sincerely,

Charleta B. Tavares

lifestyle and to use the services offered by the City and its healthcare partners.

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Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS

For various reasons, persons who have contracted HIV/AIDS are at a greater risk for homelessness than the general population, making it even more difficult for them to receive the treatment they need. The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Grant (HOPWA) is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help this vulnerable population.

The City of Columbus uses such grant funds to provide housing assistance and related services to low-income people living with HIV/AIDS in Columbus and surrounding counties. Grant funds also improve access to medical care.

Long- and short-term rent subsidies, mortgage and utility payments are available, along with case management services. This support can be arranged through the Columbus AIDS

Task Force. HOPWA funds are also used to provide short-term, congregate housing for adults living with HIV/AIDS who are experiencing homelessness at Pater Noster House.

"Those who deal with HIV/AIDS should not also have to encounter the possibility of losing their housing because of their extended inability to work or other factors," said Councilmember Charleta Tavares. "This program

provides essential support to people in need."

In 2007, 239 households received some type of financial assistance with housing and over 450 households were provided information and support services. Additional information regarding HOPWA can be obtained by contacting Sue Villilo at Columbus Public Health, svillilo@columbus.gov.

MacGregor Downey: A New Commitment to Health

The federal Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 20% of youth in the United States will be obese by 2010. As a result, these youth will be at a heightened risk for heart disease, type-II diabetes, high blood pressure, and other ailments normally associated with middle-aged and elderly people.

Obesity is defined as having a body-mass index of at least 30, or that a person is at least 30 pounds above their ideal weight. Increasingly, families are turning to surgical procedures to address their children's weight disorders. Popularized in the media, so-called "gastric bypass" surgery is considered too risky for youth in the midst of their development stages. Severely overweight youth are instead guided towards "gastric banding," a less risky procedure.

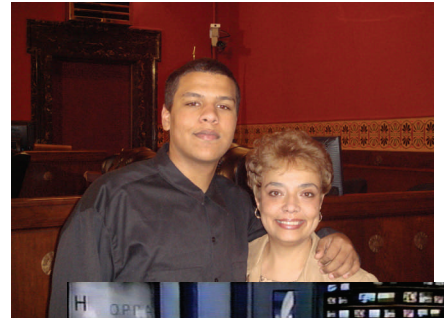
MacGregor "Mac" Downey, 17, struggled through most of his early teenage years fighting obesity. Today, he faces life 170 pounds lighter and a whole lot healthier. In April 2006, Downey ventured to the University of Illinois (Chicago) Medical Center, where he underwent the procedure, which surgically placed a constrictive band around his stomach to limit the food he could consume.

For the Bishop Hartley High School senior, his status as a 198-pound "lightweight" beats that of his sophomore year, when, at 360 pounds, he could barely endure the training. He smiles when he says he sometimes "feels like a rag doll getting tossed around on the football field."

Slimmer now, the first-string defensive end can handle grueling two-a-day practices. Downey recently discussed his struggle with weight and how he overcame it on The Oprah Winfrey Show.

"MacGregor Downey has an inspiring story," stated Councilmember Charleta Tavares.

"However, he also reminds us how important it is for us to make sure children participate in physical activity and receive proper nutrition, and why the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program at the Columbus Public Health Department plays such a critical role in the futures of our children."



(Top) Mac Downey and Councilmember Charleta Tavares at the February 21st Health, Housing and Human Services Committee Meeting,

(Bottom) Mac and Jacqueline Downey's appearance on the Oprah show.

Organization Highlight: Access HealthColumbus



Access HealthColumbus Staff (left to right) Jeff Biehl, Kim Keinath, Maria Rodgers, Hannah Mugambi, and Isi Ikharebha

Access HealthColumbus, a non-profit organization, is a public-private partnership with the mission to assure timely access to appropriate healthcare for vulnerable people in Franklin County. Access HealthColumbus connects people and ideas, and coordinates the advancement of innovative health care solutions in our community.

Since their inception in 2003, the organization has made a tremendous impact on the Columbus community, including:

- ◆ Increased primary care services by leveraging public and private investments which resulted in two new primary care practice sites and the expansion of another that increased capacity to serve an additional 17,000 people.
- ◆ Improved the effectiveness and efficiency of voluntary health services by helping our partners coordinate over 15,000 medical referrals including coordinating doctor's appointments, diagnostic testing, laboratory services, transportation, and interpretation services.
- ◆ Increased access to affordable prescription drugs by developing efficient processes that reduce paperwork and other barriers resulting in over 65,000 new prescriptions.

"As one of the founding Board members representing the City of Columbus, I am proud of the innovative and forward thinking solutions we have developed", said Councilmember Tavares.

Access HealthColumbus is looking to the future by conducting a feasibility study to determine the cost and value of expanding the capacity of primary care services for an additional 50,000 vulnerable people in our community.

For more information on AccessHealthColumbus, please visit their Website www.accesshealthcolumbus.org

Westside, Southside and Eastside Neighborhood Health Advisory Committees

Since 2005, Columbus neighborhood leaders have been organizing, planning and assessing their health needs, while working hand-in-hand with corporate, government and civic partners. The South, West and Near East Side recently formed Health Advisory Committees (HAC) sharing a commitment to improve and support healthy lives in our Columbus neighborhoods by working with partners that will provide education, prevention, promotion and access to health care.

Neighborhood leadership helped establish these important groups to provide advice, direction and information to promote community health improvement right in their own back yards. Their important work is accomplished through the collaboration of health care provider organizations and the support of community-based partnerships with their activities.

Each of the three areas brings their own set of talents and skills to face the unique challenges they face as a community. By bringing together civic associations, area commissions, residents, health providers, and community agencies they focus on addressing issues impacting the health of their own community.

The long-range goal of the Community Health Advisory Committees is to be the vehicle that brings and keeps health issues of the neighborhood in the forefront of policy makers and those that provide health care access within the South, West and Near East Side neighborhoods of our city.

This year, the Health Advisory Committees are partnering with Columbus Public Health to conduct a series of town hall meetings to preview *Unnatural Causes*, the PBS documentary series that will investigate the sources of our huge and alarming socio-economic and racial inequities and the effects on the health of our communities. An overview of *Unnatural Causes* can be found on Columbus Public Health's web site at www.publichealth.columbus.gov.

Columbus Public Health provides coordination for all three groups. If you are interested in participating in the HAC or attending the town hall meetings around *Unnatural Causes*, please contact one of the area facilitators listed below.

Near East Side HAC – Ryan Johnson rejohnson@columbus.gov (614) 645-7335

South Side HAC – Matt Baldwin msbaldwin@columbus.gov (614) 645-0380

West Side HAC – Sarah Potter sapotter@columbus.gov (614) 645-1488

“Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?”

UNNATURAL CAUSES: Is Inequality Making Us Sick? is a new PBS series illuminating the “real” root causes of poor health in America. This ground-breaking series will be the platform for Columbus Public Health and Columbus City Council to engage community debate on the links between health, illness and their roots in America's social conditions, and specifically for Columbus.

The documentary coincides with the intensifying presidential election debates offering proposals to address the crisis of the uninsured and the high cost of health care. But UNNATURAL CAUSES goes beyond the need for universal health insurance to question what makes people ill in the first place, and probes why economic status, race and zip code are even more powerful predictors of health status and life expectancy than smoking. Locally, the series will air on WOSU (channel 34) on four consecutive Thursdays from March 27 to April 17, 2008. Underlying factors such as poverty, education, racism, housing and immigrant status will be discussed as well as the Columbus “experience” on these issues.

Councilmember Charleta Tavares will join health commissioner Dr. Teresa Long and other key community leaders as guests of “The Columbus Collaborative” for a panel discussion on the challenges our communities face. The Columbus Collaborative will air at noon, Sunday, April 6 on WOSU's channel 34.

For Columbus, UNNATURAL CAUSES is already generating attention on these issues. Neighborhood Health Advisory Committees together with other partners will convene town hall conversations to preview and discuss segments of the series, their local challenges, fundamental beliefs about what makes their own community healthy—or sick—and to explore new remedies. Councilwoman Tavares invites Columbus residents to join in learning and responding to these important and challenging issues.

Information on the series, local events, including an events calendar, can be found on Columbus Public Health's Web site at www.publichealth.columbus.gov.

