

# Health Education Centers

In 1980, the Norwalk Seventh-day Adventist church, in the Los Angeles metropolis, had 340 members on its church books, but the actual attendance was less than half that figure. Five years later it had nearly tripled with up to 900 people attending services on a regular basis. What happened? It all has to do with following the blueprint for health evangelism in the cities. Here's the story:

In 1980, after the arrival of Pastor Dale Leamon and his wife, Yolanda, a group of church members studied and prayed that God would help them reach people in the surrounding communities.

"Several quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy gripped our minds as we prayed about impacting our community," Yolanda Leamon, a certified nurse-midwife, explained, such as... 'Centers of influence may be established in many places by the opening up of health food stores, hygienic restaurants, and treatment rooms' (*Testimonies*, vol 7, p. 234). 'Medical missionary work is the pioneer work of the gospel, the door through which the truth for this time is to find entrance to many homes.... A demonstration of the principles of health reform will do much toward removing prejudice against our evangelistic work' (*Evangelism*, pp. 513, 514). The formula was there—plain and simple," said Yolanda, "So we had to implement it."

In 1982 the Norwalk church members leased and remodeled a building and called it "Our Daily Bread Bakery." It featured whole-grain breads and wholesome health foods. (In 1993 it moved to a newly constructed city missions building, and a health food store, a deli-restaurant, and a Christian bookstore were added.)

Next the members started a health center that focused on lifestyle changes, health education, smoking cessation, weight and stress management, and a variety of other health-related programs.

Bits o' Heaven Day Care opened soon after, followed by the Mobile Health Van Ministry. Its free blood pressure checks, health screening, and health and spiritual literature created many interests for Bible studies and health classes and made the church well-known at the local shopping centers.

Next the Dorcas Closet opened and members began distributing clothing, furniture, toys, and household items.

Then the little congregation purchased a 20-acre ranch in the country and opened the Golden Hills Health Retreat following the Spirit of Prophecy counsel that "as far as possible, all who are seeking to recover health should place themselves amid country surroundings where they can have the benefits of outdoor life. Nature is God's physician" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p.

## An Update on the Leamons

Dale is currently the senior pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle and Yolanda is the Health Evangelism coordinator and owns and operates The Natural Childbirth and Gynecology Center, a freestanding birth center in Battle Creek, as part of her health ministry. In addition, they have developed a seminar using Hans Diehl's video tapes and have written a leader's manual. The Leamons are frequently asked to speak for camp meetings and retreats. If you are fortunate enough to hear them, you will become convinced that the Lord was right when He said there should be a vital link between the health work and the gospel. You can contact the Leamon's by calling: (616) 963-0368.

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"It was really fun to see how God can bless, knock down prejudice, and lead people into the church. We just followed the formula," Leamon says. "We just followed the blueprint and the Lord blessed."

On the east coast, Gwen Foster, former health ministries director for Allegheny East Conference, is finding that God is blessing her special work in the cities.

"When I was graduating from Loma Linda School of Public Health in 1977, I met Nathan Pritikin, the famous health educator. I asked him how we could take his program to the inner cit-

ies. He said, 'You know how to do this! ...Start conditioning camps using the blueprint that your church already has.'"

The very next year Foster started conducting two-week live-in conditioning camps (Wellness camps, see chapter 28). "We used to have to advertise; now God opens doors and does the advertising for us. We have to turn people away because we can't handle any more," Foster reported.

Gwen Foster now serves under the Mayor of Philadelphia as the city's Health Czar. See chapter 2, section "Healthy Cities" for a brief report on what she is doing there with her "76 Tons of

## The Foster Story Continues....

*G*wen Foster loves "city" work, but does the method work in the country?

There are nine regions in the Allegheny East Conference, each region has two people who serve as a health ministry team to coordinate, encourage and plan the health work for their area. One region has a small section that juts into the West Virginia mountains and for years people said nothing could be done there. It was dead.

Dr. Mamie Lindo and Sarah Wills, however, became impressed with the need to do something in a small hamlet in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Gwen began working with what she calls her "dynamic duo," and they went to the little church group in Martinsburg and certified *every member of the church* on the first level of the Lifestyle Certification program—a total of 20 people.

With these empowered people the next stop was the local hospital where the church members did health screening, using Wellsource materials developed by Don Hall. After that it was time to plan a town-wide Fitness for Life program.

When the hospital personnel asked Gwen how many she expected, she said 40. "To be truthful," Gwen said later, "The place was so small there didn't look to be 40 people in the whole hamlet. The hospital staff shook their heads, 'Impossible!'"

The Somner Ramer Memorial School, the first black school in the area, was made available for the meetings by Somner Ramer Memorial School Alumni Heritage, Inc., and the Berkeley County Board of Education. For 14 nights Gwen flew in from Boston to make the presentations to 62 people! The people were thrilled. They ended up with 14 Bible students, and one month later the church members, who were in the process of purchasing land, had a ground breaking ceremony for a church.

But the story is far from finished. The Methodist pastor of the most prominent church in the area where the cooking presentations were held, sat as an "observer" through the entire program. He was so impressed, he put what he was hearing into practice and his blood pressure went down 30 points. He is now a vegetarian and wants the program for the entire ecumenical ministerium—all the churches of the area.

Can anything come out of the mountains of West Virginia? We now know, following the blueprint for health evangelism, the answer is yes!

Fun" campaign.

### **Centers in the Cities**

As a means of relating church-sponsored health programs to community needs, community health education centers (sometimes called better living centers, health enhancement centers, or lifestyle centers) are ideal. Some of the reasons for operating such centers are:

1. Many people interested in health programs are prejudiced against attending programs in Adventist churches.
2. Such centers can be located in the hub of daytime activities and are easily accessible for evening programs. Window displays and other means of attracting attention can attract people who otherwise might not be aware of Adventist health programs.
3. Such centers create an image of Adventist concern for the community. In addition, the cooperation of community health agencies is often easier to obtain when the health education center is separate from the church.

Ellen White was given much instruction that is pertinent to operating such centers. Among her wealth of statements are these:

"It is God's design that our people should locate outside the cities, and from these outposts warn the cities, and raise in them memorials for God. There must be a force of influence in the cities, that the message of warning shall be heard" (*Evangelism*, p. 76).

"We must do more than we have done to reach the people of our cities. We are not to erect large buildings in the cities, but over and over again the light has been given me that we should establish in all our cities small plants which shall be centers of influence" (*Counsels on Health*, p. 481).

"Intemperance has filled our world, and medical missions should be established in every city. By this I do not mean that expensive institutions should be established, calling for a large outlay of means. These missions are to be conducted in such a way that they will not be a heavy drain on the cause; and their work is to prepare the way for the establishment of present truth. Medical missionary work should have its representative in every place in connection with the establishment of our churches" (*Medical*

*Ministry*, p. 322).

There have been several notable attempts in developing such centers in recent years, but it's not always easy to put the instruction God has given into full operation.

What facilities does God tell us should be included in such centers? What kinds of programs should be featured? The health education centers should have the following components:

1. Health food store
2. Hygienic (health) restaurant
3. Treatment rooms
4. A room to have lectures and Bible study
5. A place for publications
6. The facility should be simple and non-expensive; not elaborate.

### **Examples of Health Education Centers**

#### *Pacific Health Education Center (PHEC)*

One comprehensive non-profit health education center is the Pacific Health Education Center of Bakersfield, California, which was established with funds generated from the sale of a hospital. Dr. John Scharffenberg with a group of health professionals spent a number of years at the center shaping the program. Now students from around the world are trained in health evangelism by outstanding professionals in their field.

In addition PHEC operates House of Manna, a book center, health food store, and vegetarian delicatessen. One of PHEC's most popular services is the weekly Monday morning breakfast open to all, but provided as a complimentary service for those going through the HeartBeat screening, and the healthy noon meal they serve the second Sunday every month. These meals are served to exemplify their dietary recommendations of no dairy or animal products. The average attendance on Sunday is about 300 with more than 200 being non-Adventists.

The students attending PHEC cooperate with the center staff in presenting such features as: HeartBeat, weight control, diabetes, stop smoking, physical fitness, stress and family life, and both faculty and students work with churches wanting to provide cooking schools and health seminars. Hundred of non-Adventists have taken

advantage of these programs and seminars that have enabled them to overcome tobacco addiction, control diabetes, control weight, and deal with other lifestyle problems.

In the first seven years that PHEC has been

offering the three-month training program they have graduated 224 students from 30 foreign countries. Their training prepares the students to adapt the health education center concept to the needs of the overseas communities they serve.

## Ellen White's Vision for Health

**C**enters of influence may be established in many places by the opening up of **health food stores, hygienic restaurants, and treatment rooms**. Not all that needs to be done can be specified before a beginning is made. . . Plan to carry forward the work simply, sensibly, economically." — *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 234

"A place should be provided where treatment may be given for common ailments. The building might be inelegant and even rude, but it should be furnished with **facilities for giving simple treatments**. These, skillfully employed, would prove a blessing not only to our people, but to their neighbors, and might be the means of calling the attention of many to health principles." — *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 113

"In every city **a place should be provided where the slaves of evil habit may receive help to break the chains that bind them**. Strong drink is regarded by many as the only solace in trouble; but this need not be, if, instead of acting the part of the priest and Levite, professed Christians would follow the example of the good Samaritan." — *Temperance*, p. 127

"In every important place there should be **a depository for publications**. And some one who really appreciates the truth should manifest an interest to get these books into the hands of all who will read." — *Christian Service*, p. 154

"In connection with our city missions there should be **suitable rooms where those in whom an interest has been awakened can be gathered for instruction**. This necessary work is not to be carried on in such a meager way that an unfavorable impression will be made on the minds of the people. All that is done should bear favorable witness to the Author of truth, and should properly represent the sacredness and importance of the truths of the third angel's message." — *Counsels on Health*, p. 443

"**Hygienic restaurants** are to be established in the cities, and by them the message of temperance is to be proclaimed. Arrangements should be made to hold meetings in connection with our restaurants. Whenever possible, **let a room be provided where the patrons can be invited to lectures on the science of health and Christian temperance, where they can receive instruction on the preparation of wholesome food and on other important subjects**. In these meetings there should be prayer and singing and talks, not only on health and temperance topics, but also on other appropriate Bible subjects. As the people are taught how to preserve physical health, many opportunities will be found to sow the seeds of the gospel of the kingdom." — *Temperance*, p. 248

When workers in these centers cooperate with the Lord's will, He promises to give them success: "I have been instructed that little companies who have received a suitable training in evangelical and medical missionary lines should go forth to do the work to which Christ appointed His disciples. Let them labor as evangelists, scattering our publications, talking of the truth to those they meet, praying for the sick, and, if need be, treating them, not with drugs, but with nature's remedies, ever realizing their dependence on God. As they unite in the work of teaching and healing they will reap a rich harvest of souls." — *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 469

One example of the success of this program is that in 1994 there were only 10 Seventh-day Adventist physicians and nurses in Havana. Two years later there were 40 Adventist Cuban medical professionals in Havana and 200 in Cuba, largely due to baptisms from the contacts made at health programs implemented by PHEC's trainees.

PHEC would enjoy training more students for the North American Division to meet the needs of the cities. But sometimes the news of a "steal of a deal" gets around foreign countries quicker than here in North America!

In addition to the medical evangelism programs, PHEC's faculty are developing new health programs, for example, DiaBeat, a screening program for diabetes, analogous to HeartBeat with blood test and computerized lifestyle recommendations for prevention or regression of diabetes. Keep the PHEC address and phone number handy because there is soon to be a set of videos available of a number of their seminars: Pacific Health Education Center, 5300 California Avenue, Suite 200, Bakersfield, CA 93309-1604 (888) 633-7432. Fax: (661) 633-5329.

Although Pacific Health Education Center is operated by a private non-profit organization, it performs a supportive role to the church. This is an example of what can be accomplished when medical institutions support the work of health evangelism.

### ***Lifestyle Center of Benton***

Until just a few years ago there was no appreciable SDA work in Benton, TN or in the surrounding Polk county. Dr. Al and Jane Sines, RN determined to do something about reaching that formerly dark county through the health message. They began with the purchase of an AM radio station that broadcasts Life Talk radio 24-hours daily, except for 3-hours they reserve for local programming for local news, a community calendar, and health talks.

By 2001, they, and those working with them, had a fully-paid-for conference-organized church of more than a hundred members functioning in Benton on their property. The most visible

part of the property was used on which to build a truly magnificent and increasingly popular health, lifestyle and fitness center.

Health services are provided by a family practice physician. A dental and dental hygiene team focuses on preventive care. Exercise and weight management are a vital part of health care, so they provide a membership-based fitness center and provide weight training and conditioning equipment. A staff Dietitian counsels on steps to weight management. A staff Physical Therapist provides a variety of advanced technique treatments, including hydrotherapy.

The Vine Vegetarian restaurant serves bountiful and delicious vegan meals. The Vine Bakery not only provides wholesome bread products daily, but sells bulk supplies for healthy cooking and baking.

An 85-seat facility is the epicenter for ongoing classes presented by health and lifestyle professionals. Equipped with state-of-the-art audio and visual equipment to enhance the lifestyle and health lectures, they are able to present highly informative and interactive lectures that catch the interest and attention of participants.

The mayor, municipal judge, and other city officials have eaten in the restaurant and express great appreciation for the work being done there. The mayor's wife has requested Revelation studies and the banker's husband, who is retired has asked to join the Revelation study class because he "knows something awful is coming and wants to be on the right side."

For further information on the development of this model center and the programs being offered, contact Jane Sine at (423) 338-7777 during business hours Sundays through Thursdays.

### **Other Health Education Centers**

Most health education centers are small, and many are written up in Chapter 19 as self-supporting health ministries. Other health education centers are started and operated by churches for as long as there is personnel to man them. This has been especially true with many restaurants, bakeries, and treatment programs. The greatest need for continuing health education centers that



are following the blueprint, is trained, committed personnel who are willing and able to sacrifice for the Lord's work.

Roger Morton, now Director of Quality Life Seminars in Loma Linda, California was one such dedicated person who served for a time as director of the Better Living Center in Riverside, California. In a report to the faculty of the Loma Linda School of Public Health, he summarized the rationale behind these centers this way: "The basic philosophy of community approach on which the Better Living Center was developed is found in the detailed instruction given by God for health education within the institutional setting. Consequently our center was not primarily designed as a unit devoted to public evangelism. Every attempt was made to establish confidence in the Adventist philosophy of life and health and to portray God as the reference point in planning all activity."

The Riverside program was followed up by an evangelistic series in the nearby Arlington church. After one year of operation, ten had been baptized and the center had a list of 40 other persons who demonstrated specific interest in the spiritual phase of the Seventh-day Adventist message. One of the most popular features in the program was the weight control seminar which enrolled 145 people.

One non-Adventist woman drove more than eighty miles each night to attend the weight control seminar. She was thrilled that she had been able to reduce and keep her weight under control and expressed her opinion that this was a dramatic answer to the prayers that had been offered in her behalf.

Probably there would be more such centers if they could be truly self-supporting. It makes sense for hospitals and rural conditioning centers to sponsor city centers as a means of steering clients to less accessible localities. This has been the model for many self-supporting institutions. For example, for some years Wildwood Lifestyle Center in Georgia has sponsored the Country Life Natural Foods and Vegetarian Restaurant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Besides the restaurant that is open for the lunch hour, and the health

food and book store, the Country Life provides evening health education seminars and physicians from Wildwood hold clinics and counseling sessions on a weekly basis. One unusual phase of the relationship between the restaurant center and the Wildwood Lifestyle program is that at least once during a guest's three-week stay at Wildwood they are taken by bus to the Natural Foods center in Chattanooga where they become familiar with the publications, health food supplies and are served a vegetarian meal in the restaurant.

The Uchee Pines Institute under the direction of Doctors Calvin and Agatha Thrash is operating a similar restaurant/health education center in Columbus, Georgia.

### **Community Services Centers**

Some are confused about the difference between a health education center and an Adventist Community Services (ACS) center. In general, a health education center is a facility that specializes in health issues, while an ACS center is a multi-service agency which may include health programs.

For ACS today a "center" is not so much a building as it is an organization. ACS is the official agency of the church which has been recognized widely by government and non-governmental organizations in North America as representing the church's humanitarian interests outside the religious sector. As an "agency" it is not the same thing as a "department," nor is it an "institution." (Department and institution are the two most familiar organizational types in the Adventist Church.) As an agency, it collaborates with departments and institutions when they have programs they would like to project into the community.

An ACS agency has its own board, just like a church school does. Usually several churches co-sponsor an ACS center and have representatives on the board. The agency director is appointed by the board and accountable to the board. This is a different role from the local community service director or the local church health ministries leader.

Those ACS agencies that meet the highest standards of professional leadership, fund raising, program development and community relations can become ADRA Affiliates. But, many of these agencies do not use the name ACS or ADRA in their public operations. They may have a local name such as Good Neighbor House, Samaritan Center or Oasis Health Services. Some of the best health programs mentioned in this manual are run by ADRA Affiliate agencies. Most of the health programs given as examples in this manual are organized in a different way. ACS is an agency of the church with the mission of assisting the health ministries, as well as other departments, in achieving humanitarian objectives in the community.

For additional information on the guidelines for ACS agencies, see Ministries of Compassion which is available from AdventSource at (800) 328-0525.

### **Health Restuarants**

Operating a vegetarian restaurant/and or bakery is one of the best ways there is to witness, and one of the most demanding to maintain. Once you begin food service, it's difficult to take time off unless you have a well-trained support staff.

There may be many "health" restaurants owned and operated by Seventh-day Adventists, but there is no association where names can be obtained. The Country Life restaurants, however, are a part of Outpost Centers, Inc. If you are interested in starting a food service ministry, contact the mangers of these organizations and benefit from their experience.

The Country Life name originated at Oak Haven where Ron Crary was working with the Country Life wholesale food distribution. When Ron went to New York, he started a Country Life restaurant that served noon meals, offered literature and provided health education and Bible study opportunity. His program, including the vegan diet and buffet method of food service, has become a model for other Country Life restaurants. If you happen to be doing some international traveling, you may want to visit one of the

Country Life restaurants located overseas.

Country Life restaurants in North America include:

Country Life Boston, (617) 951-2534, 200 High St.  
Boston, MA 02110

Country Life Chattanooga, (423) 622-2451, 3748  
Ringgold Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37412

Country Life Columbus, (706) 323-9194, 1217  
Eberhart Ave., Columbus, GA 31906

Country Life Keene, (603) 357-3975, 15 Roxbury,  
Keene, NH, 03431

Country Life Nashville, (615) 327-3695, 1917  
Division St., Nashville, TN 37203

### **Schools of Health in Every Church**

Here is the instruction:

"We have come to a time when every member of the church should take hold of medical missionary work. The world is a lazar house filled with victims of both physical and spiritual disease. Everywhere people are perishing for lack of a knowledge of the truths that have been committed to us. The members of the church are in need of an awakening, that they may realize their responsibility to impart these truths" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 62).

"Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149).

Much of the city center work outlined in this chapter is being conducted by health professionals and ministers. Often church members excuse themselves from this kind of work because they feel limited by knowledge and experience. But their involvement is essential because of their unique ability to identify with people on their level and to offer love, sympathy, and support to those struggling with behavior change.

In every center and every program there should be built-in mechanisms and time for interaction between church members and the public. Bonds formed in this way will tend to lead people to attend the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to feel welcome because they already have friends there in whom they can confide and from whom they can receive ongoing help and support.

Nowadays, when competing community agencies are offering many of the same kinds of health and family programs and services that we are, one way Adventist programs can be unique is that we provide a voluntary staff of committed, loving church members eager to assist people in their struggle with behavior change. Accurate facts and quality presentations may attract people to our health programs, but only unselfish, loving interest on the part of church members will win people to Christ and His church.