PART XI

MOBILE CLASSES

As part of the design of the Mayor's Health and Fitness Challenge, fitness and relaxation classes were provided at different locations throughout Miami-Dade County.

Tai Chi

In China, it is not unusual to see individuals or groups practicing Tai Chi in the parks. This ancient Chinese exercise is best described as a moving form of yoga, deep breathing exercises and meditation combined. The movements resemble a slow motion and graceful dance performed softly with smooth and even transitions.

In the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* researchers have reported that Tai Chi exercises helped seniors improve their physical functioning because it is considered a low-impact exercise. At Tufts University, an evaluation of the effects of Tai Chi exercise on physical function among older persons was conducted as a randomized controlled trial. (F. Li, P. Harmer, E. McAujey, et al., Ann Behav Med., 2001, vol. 23, pp. 139-146, July 25, 2001 (Reviewed: December 23, 2002):

Randomized Controlled Trial

Ninety-six (96) healthy, but inactive adults ages 65 to 96 were assigned to either a 6-month Tai Chi class or a control group. Those in the control group were instructed to maintain their current physical activities and were promised a four-week Tai Chi class at the end of the study. Both groups completed a physical activity assessment at weeks 1, 12, and 24. The assessment measured their ability to perform an array of activities, from vigorous exercise like running to tasks such as carrying groceries, walking up stairs or dressing.

Those assigned to the Tai Chi class met two (2) times per week for sixty (60) minutes. Each session consisted of a fifteen (15) minute warm-up, thirty (30) minutes of Tai Chi exercises, and a fifteen (15) minute cool-down. The volunteers were also encouraged to practice at home.

Exercise Made a Difference

In the baseline physical functioning assessment, about 60% of the volunteers reported some physical limitation in moderate-to-vigorous activities and about 25% reported difficulties with activities of daily living (eating, dressing and bathing).

At the end of the study, more than half of those enrolled in the Tai Chi class who had reported functional limitations at the start of the study indicated improvement. This is consistent with other studies showing Tai Chi to be a useful exercise for seniors -- most notably, in reducing falls. There was some improvement also noted in the control group, but much less than in the Tai Chi *group.*

How does Tai Chi work?

The low impact rotation of muscles through graceful movements and deep breathing exercises improve posture, breathing patterns and flexibility of the practitioners. Upper body relaxation combined with good leg strength make it easier to get up from a sitting position as well as assisting with circulation. The deep breathing exercises create strong lungs which translate into one being able to walk without getting winded. The meditation in movement nature of Tai Chi is calming and relaxing.

CHALLENGE TAI CHI CLASSES

Tai Chi Challenge Mobile Classes were provided at different locations throughout Miami-Dade County. The classes consisted of ten (10) consecutive weekly-classes, free of charge, for those completing a Challenge Registration Form.

Population Demographics
General Population
Adults and Seniors

Challenge Registrations
410 Adults

Tai Chi Instruction
Alliance Qi Gong Taiji, Inc.
Jeffrey Morris, Instructor

Tai Chi Classes Locations
Miami-Dade County Government Center - Stephen P. Clark Building
Miami-Dade County North and South Regional Libraries
Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation - Deering Estate
Family Christian Haitian Senior Center
Miami Springs Senior Center
African Heritage Cultural Arts Center
Key Biscayne Senior Center
Miami-Dade County Health Department
Miami-Dade County International Airport
Jackson Memorial Hospital – Jefferson Reeves Clinic

CHALLENGE HIP HOP AND CHAIR AEROBICS CLASSES

Also, as part of the design of the Mayor's Health and Fitness Challenge, fitness aerobic classes were provided at different locations throughout Miami-Dade County. The classes also consisted of ten (10) consecutive weekly-classes, free of charge, for those completing a Challenge Registration Form.

Hip Hop Aerobic Exercises?
The invigorating hip-hop aerobics and chair aerobics routines are designed to give an adrenaline rush and a cardio high to the participants. The recipe: A fast paced "catchy" hip hop tune combined with dance steps like movements in a dance-class format.

The weekly classes were extremely popular among the young and those adults interested in the cardio-vascular exercise and body sculpturing. Among the senior population, the Hip Hop Chair Aerobics classes continue to be very popular as the participants move their bodies to hip hop tunes while sitting down.

Participants Demographics
General Population
Adults, Seniors and Children

Challenge Registrations
160 Adults
20 Children

Hip Hop Aerobics Instruction
The SAK Foundation
Kim and Scott McCartney, Instructors

Hip Hop and Chair Aerobic Classes Locations
Miami-Dade County Caleb Center Building
Jose De Diego Middle School
YWCA of Greater Miami
Grace of God Baptist Church
Family Christian Haitian Senior Center
Miami Springs Senior Center
African Heritage Cultural Arts Center
Miami-Dade County Health Department

MIAMI-DADE MAYOR'S

HEALTH & FITNESS Challenge

In Partnership with:

Health Foundation
of South Florida

Presented by:

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Join this year-long program of FREE, monthly fitness, nutrition and stress management activities designed to help you and your family get healthy.

It's fun. It's free. It's up to you!

FOR INFORMATION ON MONTHLY EVENTS Call: 305-375-3333

Or Visit: www.mayorschallenge.net

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