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Moving Forward

Moving Forward



A spotlight on organizations that are making significant steps to reduce health disparities in our communities. Each month we feature an organization or individual that is making a measurable difference reducing health disparities among the people they serve. Commitment, dedication, and action: *Moving Forward*.

The Many Roads of Effective Outreach

Sara Khalfa has been in the Outreach Office of Southside Community Health Services since 2004. In that time she has been able to follow her passions of HIV/AIDS education and awareness while over the same time develop a new-found drive for physical activity and nutritional programming. During this time, the Outreach Office has transitioned to Q Health Connections - Strengthening Community Health through Innovative Partnerships. Their mission is to actively identify community health needs and develop strategic and proactive initiatives to improve health literacy and the overall health and wellness of the community.

An active participant in National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) since 2004, she serves as the State 's planning chairperson for NLAAD activities and has supported the move to expand NLAAD beyond one day, spreading the message across the entire month of October. "Some of the most rewarding moments from these outreach events has been sitting with young people and having the opportunity to connect and educate them about the spread of HIV and their risk. It's also been great to have some of them stay in touch over the years and continue to get tested and refer friends."



Sara is also a vital member of the *Step to It* Southside walking group. When the group began, the goal was to get walkers to meet every Wednesday to walk in the Bryant community via a designated path. During the winter months they walked inside Sabathani Community Center, and within months of starting the groups, they realized the walkers were dedicated and looking for newer challenges. This led to the *Step to It Challenge*. Originally designed to get walkers in the various walking clubs around the city to learn about each other and start walking more, it was a huge success at creating walking teams of friends, family and co-workers. "As a result we had two more Challenges and reached over 1,500 people with a message of healthy eating, increased activity and the fun they can have being healthy."

One of the many examples of people moving forward involves a woman who joined the group at the end of September 2006 and by her enjoyment of walking, began looking to increase her activity. "She thought nothing of walking four miles to see a friend she met through the program. Then the two of them would walk to and around the nearest lake." Soon, this participant began to log more than 15 miles a day, resulting in a 30 pound loss and reduction of her blood pressure. The weight loss also had a dramatic impact on her diabetes, she was taken off two of her medications and the third was reduced to the lowest possible dosage. "It's seeing results like that which make doing this work so rewarding. It's exciting to see participants take charge of their health and make positive choices for themselves."