

# Health Ambassadors to Influence Physical Activity within Community

by: Jasmine Harris

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

The Physical Activity Leadership Training focused on introducing the Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Improvements theory to address the lack of physical activity at each Health Ambassadors' site location. This methodology asserts the idea that "Where we live, learn, work, and play affects how we live." Using this concept is the basis of the PSE approach. The training provided the Health Ambassadors with a different perspective that would result in a greater impact on their site populations. Health ambassadors were equipped with the skills to implement PSE improvements, advocate for those improvements, and train others on the appropriate physical activity basics.

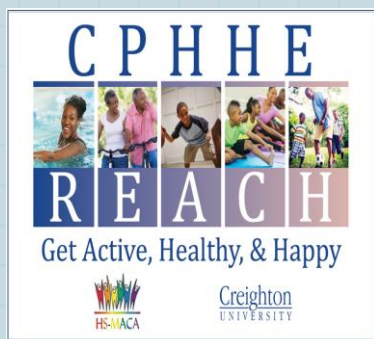
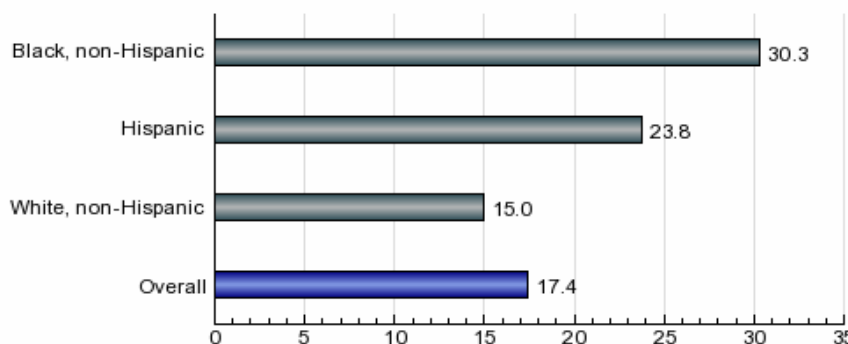


## SUMMARY

The continuous learning environment of the training sessions offered the trainers the opportunity to receive instant feedback from the Health Ambassadors. The trainers were then able to take that feedback and tweak their presentations and examples to enhance and reinforce the skills and information presented. The Health Ambassadors enjoyed the interactions between the trainers and with each other during the sessions. They look forward to coming back in year two (2) for the continuing-education sessions to share experiences and hear what the other Health Ambassadors have been doing at their sites..

## CHALLENGE

According to the 2011 PRC National Health Survey on [www.douglascohealth.org](http://www.douglascohealth.org), 17.4% of adults in Douglas County Omaha, Nebraska reported no physical activity in the past month, other than their regular job. Blacks, non-Hispanic exceed that percentage at 30.3%.



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## SOLUTION

One of the goals for the Creighton University Center for Promoting Health and Health Equality-Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (CPHHE-REACH) program is to train individuals from faith-based organizations, Omaha Housing Authority towers, and Charles Drew Health Center, a federally qualified health center, to be Health Ambassadors. Spear-headed by Health Educators from Creighton University's School of Medicine, the Train-the-Trainer component of this program challenged Health Ambassadors to think outside of the realm of regular health programs to encourage an increase in physical activity in the Omaha African-American population..

## SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS



Train-the-Trainer has a built-in sustainability concept. Training more than one person per site to spread the knowledge and advocate from the source is essential. Training two Health Ambassadors per site expands reach within the site and reduces likelihood of trainer burn-out by lending support to each other. Train-the-Trainer expects that education will be continued for any site previously trained and at least one previously-trained person will return from each site to receive annual refresher training. There will be new ambassadors trained from newly-recruited sites annually, ultimately resulting in a network of ambassadors. The Creighton School of Medicine trainers will provide continued technical support to Health which includes being a sounding board for ambassadors, connecting them with other trained ambassadors, and guiding them toward best practices.

## RESULTS

There were eighteen (18) individuals trained during year one (1) of the program. Thirteen (13) individuals completed all of the requirements to receive a Certificate of Completion to be a Health Ambassador. Sessions were divided so that organizations with similar structure were grouped together to engage in rich conversation that offered excellent examples of differing PSE Improvements between entities. For instance, each housing tower is an entity that must follow the overall policies of Omaha Housing Authority, but each location has its own identity with its own system and environment that can be used to increase physical activity in its population. Examples include one tower's population is younger than the other towers' populations and another tower offers a food pantry for its residents. Each Health Ambassador began examining the strengths and weaknesses specific to their site in order to develop a strategic plan to implement PSE improvements that would make a difference in their location.

*\*CPHHE-REACH partnered with Creighton School of Medicine, Charles Drew Health Center, Nebraska Center for Health Families, Omaha Housing Authority, and Creighton's Health Sciences Multicultural and Community Affairs (HS-MACA)/Collective for Youth to use funds from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct Physical-Activity Leadership Train-the-Trainer on physical activity.\**