



IT'S TIME TO ACTIVATE AMERICA!

Each issue OSF highlights unique ways that the Ys, JCCs, and fitness suppliers are involved in their communities, and the programs that they initiate to reach out and improve the health/wellness and fitness of others.

Recently, we spoke with Johathan Lever, the National Director for Activate America, the national health and wellness initiative of the YMCA of the USA.

OSF believes that the Activate America initiative is important because it has the potential to impact and improve the health and wellness of the entire nation, in all age groups and at all income levels. It's about education and training and that's one of the real strengths of the YMCA, YWCA and JCC communities.

If you are wondering why we need a coordinated effort to combat America's obesity epidemic, just read a statement that has received much media attention over the past few months, written by Dr. S. Jay Olshansky, a Longevity Researcher at the University of Illinois at Chicago; "Today's younger generation will have shorter and less healthy lives than their parents for the first time in modern history."

We know there are hundreds of worthwhile programs out there that support the Activate America goals and ideals and we would like to hear about them. We also know that these programs and people need support and one of the goals of this magazine is to help broaden exposure and coverage for current programs, so that we can collectively work on solutions to change the direction America's youth is headed.

According to the CDC: The prevalence of overweight among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, going from 7% in 1980 to 18.8% in 2004. The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 more than tripled, increasing from 5% to 17.1%.

The Jewish Community Centers Association of North America is currently designing an early intervention and prevention model program for pre-school children. The goal of this continental initiative is to help parents and their children develop attitudes and habits that will facilitate the maintenance of healthful weight and body mass indexes throughout the children's lives.

The plan includes partnering with local organizations and establishing lead JCCs to develop and implement model programs that work through the JCC Early Childhood Education (ECE) network, with the end goal of developing a comprehensive intervention strategy that can be piloted in communities throughout the continent.

Both initiatives have high aspirations and both organizations are uniquely positioned to succeed at the task, but it will be a decade before we see a significant change...and it starts today!

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