

The Faith Connection

~ News and Ideas for Your Health Ministry ~

December 9, 2009

The Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, 1515 Locust Street, Suite 705 ~ Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-232-5815, ParishNurse@mercy.pmhs.org

This issue marks one year of sending our monthly newsletter to your e-mailboxes. Since last December, our mailing list has increased from 500 to nearly 800. Thanks for forwarding The Faith Connection!

Upcoming Events

◆ **Parish Nurse Basic Preparation Course 2010**

Winter Session

- ✓ January 22 & 23
- ✓ February 26 & 27

- ✚ Please **register by December 15, 2009** to avoid cancellation of the course
- ✚ Class size is limited to 20 participants
- ✚ The course includes the International Parish Resource Center's (IPNRC's) newly revised curriculum – **30 CEs**
- ✚ **Cost: \$395**

- ✚ Limited **scholarship funds are available**. Please contact us for an application.
- ✚ RNs are commissioned as Parish Nurses and receive an IPNRC pin.
- ✚ Other interested persons are most welcome and will be commissioned as Health Ministers.
- ✚ **Location:**
 - Beulah Presbyterian Church in Penn Hills, located just off the Churchill exit of the Parkway East (Route 376).

Contact dmayernik@mercy.pmhs.org or 412-232-5815.

*Planning ahead: Summer Session will be offered:
Monday, June 7 – Thursday, June 10, 2010*

Parish Nurses Making a Difference

This story comes from secretary/health minister of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Braddock, Pa. Immanuel offers a free senior lunch twice a month serving between 50 and 90. Games are played with the prizes of fruits and other health related items. Devotion is offered by their pastor, and a nurse from the Area Agency on Aging takes blood pressures and offers health related literature. As a congregation they are quite mindful of their own members as well as those of their community.

Several months ago, the plight of a member of Immanuel was the catalyst that helped her congregation get organized to better serve others. Since it was her birthday, it was not considered alarming when her phone was always busy. It was reasonable to think that her many friends were calling to wish her well. However, one friend was relentless in calling and became worried. After talking with other members, a group went to her house to discover the lights on and no tracks in the snow to indicate that she had left her home. The police were unable to break-in without authorization from a family member, so the church members began their search for her son. After five hours of searching the Internet, a cell phone number for the son was discovered and he was contacted. Because he did not have a key to her home, he was not able to get in, but was able to give the authorization for the police to break in. The woman was found on the floor with her phone off the hook. After a short hospital stay to regulate her blood pressure, she was returned home and now has her granddaughter living with her.

The question in the minds of the members of Immanuel was how to keep this from happening again. They asked for phone numbers of family members and helpful neighbors to be kept on file in the church office. They suggested that keys be given to family and trusted neighbors. Concerned church members averted a possible tragedy.

Another suggestion along these lines would be to start a “Good Night Buddy” program in your church and community. This concept was started while sitting around a dining room table in a parsonage in rural Indiana on a winter afternoon after a Bible study. Most of the ladies were over 80 and lived alone. Two of the ladies commented about being “Good Night Buddies”. They had not been close friends until they had both lost their husbands about the same time and were now living alone. They decided to call once a day to see how the other was doing and see that they were still “kicking”. It grew into a strong friendship. The group talked about the need to keep in touch with someone in case there were problems. The ladies picked pairs and started calling. For some pairs it was just a check-in type call, but for others it was the beginning of a deeper friendship. If there were any problems, the church office or the pastor was called to investigate.

Is this a ministry your church should consider?

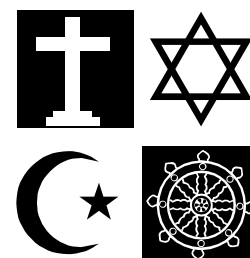
Focus on Health and Wellness

Much of the focus at this time of year is managing the holiday stress while we try to enjoy the holiday season. For some, the holiday stress is related to loneliness due to not being with family or not having any family to be with. For some, is it too many parties to attend, while for others, it is not having any parties to attend.

Some are caught up in the commercialization of the season, and others are saddened by lack of funds for even modest gift giving.

Whatever the stresses are in your life, we hope that you take time to remember the reason for this season is the birth of our Savior. When we stand at the stable, we can't help but be thankful for all that He has done for us. With that spirit in our hearts, it leads us to reach out to others.

Bulletin or Newsletter Article for January



Shalom! Blessings of peace in this New Year. By Marge Kerlin

The concept of shalom means more than just peace. Shalom embraces the elements of life - peace, prosperity, rest, safety, security, justice, happiness, health, welfare and wholeness – that, when in balance, make our lives and communities God-centered. Imbalance produces stress. Living with stress challenges our need to hold fast and maintain inner peace. What causes stress in your life? Take a few minutes to identify your sources of stress.

- Work
- Family
- News media
- Poor health habits
- Negative attitudes and feelings

Jot down your sources of stress. Identify the ones you can control. Spend your healthy energy wisely, change what can be changed. Some helpful strategies to reduce the stresses of daily life include:

- Plan your day. Avoid the conflict of last-minute rushing. Have a back-up plan.
- Organize your home and work place.
- Take breaks. Stretch and/or walk periodically.
- Exercise regularly.
- Be positive. Avoid negative “self-talk”.
- Laugh often! Release those good chemicals that keep you healthy.
- Stay connected to family, friends, God and Church.
- Pray. Prayer calms the inner self, lifts the spirit and achieves inner peace.

Comforting God, keep me under your wings when I feel burdened with distress. Amen.

Parish Nurse Resources

January 18 - 24 *Thyroid Awareness Week*

While *Thyroid Awareness Week* doesn't get the attention of more prevalent health problems, it is a concern that we shouldn't neglect. Proper diagnosis and treatment of thyroid problems makes a difference in a person's health and well-being.

The following bulletin board is taken from www.gha.org/pha/bulletinboards/thyroid/index.asp

Bulletin Board readers will learn the symptoms of thyroid problems.

For more information the following websites can be helpful:

- www.thyroidawarenessmonth.com/thyroid-campaigns.htm
- www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles
- www.netwellness.org/feature/2009-01-thyroid/default.cfm

THYROID

Awareness Month

The Thyroid Gland
What does it look like?
The thyroid gland is shaped like a butterfly.
Where is it?
It is found at the bottom of your neck in the throat.
What does it do?
Your thyroid gland makes and releases thyroid hormone, which helps control your body's metabolism. It also helps control your body's weight, heart rate, and body temperature. It also helps control your body's growth and development.

HYPOthyroidism
Sometimes your thyroid gland does not make enough thyroid hormone. This is called "hypothyroidism."
What can I do about it?
Talk to your doctor. The doctor will do a blood test to check if your thyroid hormone is low. The doctor may give you medicine. The medicine does not cure your thyroid, but you will have to take it for the rest of your life.
The good news is that you should be able to live a normal life with it.

What are the symptoms?

- You may be tired all the time or sleep more.
- You may gain weight easily.
- You may have a dry, itchy skin.
- You may have a slower heart rate.
- You may have a slower metabolism.
- You may have a slower growth rate.
- You may have a slower body temperature.
- You may have a slower body weight.
- You may have a slower body growth.

HYPERthyroidism
Sometimes your thyroid gland makes too much thyroid hormone. This is called "hyperthyroidism."
What can I do about it?
Talk to your doctor. The doctor will do a blood test to check if your thyroid hormone is high.
What will the doctor do?
The doctor will test your blood to see if there is too much thyroid hormone. The doctor will decide what to do for you. You may have to take a special kind of medicine to help to kill off or change your own thyroid cells. In some cases, you might need surgery to remove the thyroid.

What are the symptoms?

- You get very nervous and jittery.
- You might lose weight even though you eat a lot.
- You might have a fast heart rate.
- You might have a fast metabolism.
- You might have trouble sleeping.
- You might have trouble concentrating.
- You might have trouble swallowing.
- You might have trouble breathing.
- You might have trouble seeing.
- You might have trouble hearing.
- You might have trouble talking.
- You might have trouble thinking.

What can I do?
Pay attention to how you feel.
The doctor is NOT here to cure you unless you tell them!
Thyroid disease can be treated.
Remember!
YOU are the most important person in your healthcare team!

International Parish Nurse Resource Center (IPNRC)

Challenge Yourself – Change the World

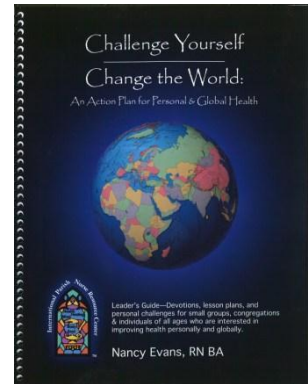
Just Released October 2009!

\$40 Leader's Guide

This new program combines 40 days of devotion with a healthy lifestyle program, service project options, and PowerPoint presentations for healthy eating.

The leader's guide includes everything you need for a class or small group setting.

- A 40 day devotional with questions for reflection/small group discussion
- Instructions for a wellness program and a service project – participants earn points/raise money for changing behaviors and donate to a project from the devotional or a local charity
- Three PowerPoint lessons – healthy breakfasts, new parents, and general lifestyle changes for better health – included on a CD



Thank you for reading The Faith Connection!

The staff at Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program prays that you have a Blessed Christmas Season and a safe and happy New Year.