

# Thrift Tip: Giving is Thrifty

## **Why Giving Is Thrifty**

Volunteerism and involvement in one's community are key components of thrift: where you have people practicing thrift, you have people in solidarity, giving of themselves to one another. On this MLK Day—a day when many give their time to serve others in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.—this is a timely thrift lesson.

Esperanza Health Center, located in Philadelphia, PA demonstrates thrift by teaching patients to give back to their neighborhood through the community health promoters program. And, since thrift is the wise use of resources, and since health is a resource, to promote health is to promote thrift!

## **An Interview with Susan Post, Executive Director of Esperanza Health Center, and Dr. Wendell Kellum, MD, Associate Medical Director**

### **How are thrift and health related?**

WK: “I like that you are talking about health as a resource and a way of stewardship. Because that's what we're about. Sometimes people think that health is over here, and this is where I go to be given health. You know, this is where health is distributed. But health as a way of stewardship means that I make choices in my daily life, and that I have the control, power, and knowledge to take care of my health.”

### **How does Esperanza help meet the needs of the community?**

SP: “One way is through the Community Health Promoters program, teaching people at a lay level to promote health in their communities, with their neighbors, in their churches, on their blocks. It teaches them general health information and things like taking blood pressures and ways to disseminate good information about health and preventative care.”

### **How does the Community Health Promoters program work?**

SP: “Participants must attend 40 hours of class before getting their certificate. Each week a concept (taking blood pressure, dental hygiene, caring for newborn babies, healthy eating) is taught, and then promoters practice in their neighborhoods. The first session was taught in Spanish. Of the 40 people who began the program, 37 completed all the training!”

### **What are the advantages of this program?**

WK: “Sometimes you spend all your time and resources addressing things that would be better handled in prevention. For example, a lot of diabetes is related to lifestyle and dietary issues. With this program, there are ways that we can communicate that.”

### **Do you have any stories about how this program has changed lives?**

SP: “One promoter (or graduate) does blood pressure from her house on Wednesdays. She sometimes gets a line of people out her house wanting to get their blood pressure checked. And again, it's not just getting the blood pressure checked, but it's going to her house, all being together, caring about health together.”

“Also, [the crossing guard who became a health promoter] just cheers me on when she sees me on my bike . . . [and then she'll call out] 'It was a great class last night!'. . . You just see an excitement in people, and it makes them want to be leaders in the community. It goes beyond the direct health care and information they are giving, and allows them to participate in the community in a new way, as leaders.”

**Why is the community approach to healthcare so affective?**

SP: “Health is not just the physical, it's the spiritual and the communal. It's about being together. Probably my eating habits are not about anything my doctor said to me. They're about my friend who's trying to eat this way, and it makes me want to do it too.”

“And that's where this community health promoter program is not just about the job we give them, but about the message that we're all together, we're with them. The community nature of it all is—I think it really is a thrift concept—because we're all gaining by the power of community, of being together.”

Information courtesy of <http://newthrift.org>