



MSUCOM students join alum to fight the obesity epidemic

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By Sumaira Hai

If there is anything that Paul Ehrmann, MSUCOM Class of 1980, learned after 35 years as a family physician it is that 80 percent of chronic diseases are preventable.

It is for that reason that the owner of Family Health Care Center in Royal Oak, Michigan began the HealthyTown-Everywhere (HTE) initiative.

A free, public program, Ehrmann developed HTE to help address the obesity epidemic by promoting healthy lifestyles and improving wellness, primarily through diet, exercise and behavior modification.

HTE participants can expect nutrition education, get grocery store tours, BMI screenings and blood pressure readings. There is also information for elementary school children.

MSUCOM students have taken part by recording participants' blood pressure, blood sugar and body mass index, three factors that are helpful in identifying potential health risks. Ehrmann said that students also helped with social media and the program's overall sustainability. He hopes to continue it from one class to the next.

Ehrmann explained that the venue of choice for the program is the neighborhood grocery store so physicians and health care providers can become leaders and, "educate consumers and patients on how to eat, what to eat and encourage more activity," in a point of service setting that they regularly visit.

Ehrmann and his team held three pilot programs at the Holiday Market in Royal Oak. The final 2016 event, focused on parents and children, took place Nov. 3.

By the end of this year he hopes to develop a business plan and recruit like-minded physicians who are interested in sharing HTE in other communities. He hopes that by replicating the program, people will learn how to use their own local and regional resources to better their health.

Ehrmann believes that though passionate physicians are important for success, patients also have to be just as committed. He says the mindset has to be there before the journey can begin.

"I have learned that if you can think it, you can do it," Ehrmann said. "It must start with a passion and doing things for the right reasons. I am hoping that other physicians will feel the same way and adopt this program in their own town. We owe this to the people of the communities that we serve."

The biggest challenge that Ehrmann has faced is that not every community has a neighborhood grocery store or access to healthy resources. However, the encouragement and enthusiasm he has received from not only people and physicians who have participated in the program, but also, patients in his practice, have kept him going and inspired him to continue expanding his endeavors, tailoring efforts to all the challenges that might arise in these potential situations.

HTE is presented in partnership with Holiday Market, the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Oak School District, the Oakland County Health Division, the Coordinated Dietetics Program at Wayne State University and MSUCOM. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan and AccentHealth have also supporters.

To learn more about HTE and Ehrmann, visit, <https://www.facebook.com/HealthyTownEverywhere/> and <http://www.docpaul.com/>.





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