



SOWN Together:

Supporting Adults, especially Women 50+, through Life's Transitions

THE E-NEWSLETTER OF THE SUPPORTIVE OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK

May/June 2011

Studies show the benefits of strong social support networks

The benefits of strong support systems, like friendships, can be just as good for your body as it is for your state of mind. Recent study after study highlights the connections between social intelligence and general intelligence.

“Healthy behavior may be contagious.”

Kylie Ball of Deakin University, Australia [in Science Daily](#).

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SOWN Friendraiser highlights

On June 9th, SOWN supporters and new friends gathered at the Center for Architecture in downtown Philadelphia to learn more about the impact of SOWN's programs on older adults. Attendees had the rare pleasure of hearing firsthand from two SOWN clients what issues they faced as they aged, and the important impact of strong social support networks on their lives.



“Our Strength” silhouette exhibit gave supporters an opportunity to show the influence of meaningful women in their lives

Dr. Mariana Chilton from Drexel University's School of Public Health also spoke about the dangers of food insecurities to the health of older adults and children and the critical need for strong support services that tackle the entire cycle of food, nutrition, education, and security to combat hunger for multigenerational families, older adults, and children.

SOWN Grandparent Ambassadors support Intergenerational Family Care Act

SOWN grandparents who are raising children in their care served on the planning committee for a conference on intergenerational resources and information, presented by the office of PA State Senator Anthony H. Williams, held in May.



GrandFamilyResource Center grandparent ambassadors at the conference on intergenerational resources

SOWN grandparents helped generate more awareness for Senator Williams' proposed

bill, SB 119, the Intergenerational Family Care Act, which assists families in which children are being raised by their grandparents or other generation-skipping older relatives.

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SOWN Growing Healthy Lives Together bridges cultures

The introduction of lining dancing to residents at University Square apartments in West Philadelphia through *Growing Healthy Lives Together*, SOWN's health and wellness program, provided an unusual opportunity for two groups, African Americans and Koreans, to build stronger connections with each other. More than 20% of University Square residents are Korean and SOWN staff have adapted the program to include culturally different understandings of health and wellness.

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One-click to help SOWN reach “100 and Beyond” fans on Facebook !

Studies show the benefits of strong social support networks

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Having an active social life can:

- decrease the risks for dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- increase healthy influences on exercising and eating habits
- boost your brain
- bolster your self-esteem
- ease depression when facing health matters

“Having supportive relationships can actually postpone the aging process. A [recent study](#) from Brandeis University researchers found that a **strong social network** -- especially when combined with physical exercise and a feeling of control in one's life -- could delay health declines by up to ten years.”

Source: Huffington Post, May 3, 2011

SOWN Grandparent Ambassadors support Intergenerational Family Care Act

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SB 119 would “address critical needs identified at the conference, such as rental assistance, day-care assistance for working heads of households and development and improvement of intergenerational housing. The bill has bipartisan support and sits in the Public Health and Welfare committee in the state Senate.”

“On average, it costs more than \$1,100 every month to care for one child in foster care, according to the state Department of Public Welfare.”

“By investing a little in intergenerational families now, we stand to save the Commonwealth millions, while allowing children to grow up in loving and stable family homes that put them on the path to being responsible citizens,” said Williams. “And that’s something we all want.”

Source: Press release, office of PA State Senator Anthony H. Williams

SOWN Growing Healthy Lives Together shows benefits

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“The soul line dancing seemed more familiar to the African American participants, but almost all Korean participants got on the dance floor,” noted SOWN health educator, Hillary Blecker. Goal setting in physical and health exercises is just one component of the program.

To encourage community building, SOWN staff asked the participants to introduce themselves and give a short explanation and the significance of their name. Through the sharing, a cultural exchange occurred. A Korean woman explained that she had two names, one that was given when Korea was under Japanese rule and one was from her family. This sparked questions from non-Korean participants about this history, and it was explained that all Koreans grew up under Japanese rule prior to World War II.

After introductions, one Korean participant said that she was the oldest in the room and wanted to share that she loved the *Growing Healthy Lives Together* program and thought it was excellent. She then started singing “Que sera, sera,” and other residents joined in, and although some of the participants did not know English, once the chorus started, everyone joined in, speakers of all languages and backgrounds. “It was a beautiful moment and bodes well for bridging gaps in the building,” said Blecker.