

Your Life May Depend on Overcoming Obesity

BY GRANT HIGGINSON, M.D.

A death certificate tells only part of the story. While Oregonians are dying of heart disease, stroke and cancer, the most significant cause of death may never appear on the document: obesity.

Many of us commit to exercise and eat better, but historically most will abandon their resolve within a few weeks. With such discouraging information, why bother? Your life depends on it.

Each year about 300,000 deaths in the United States may be attributed to obesity, according to a report from the surgeon general.

More than one in four Oregonians are overweight and half are sedentary. Overweight and obesity are associated with heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems and psychological disorders such as depression.

We live in an environment that has made unhealthy behavior the easier choice. We drive rather than walk or bike. We eat burgers and fries rather than fruits and vegetables. We sit at computers and in front of televisions rather than getting the 30 minutes of moderate activity recommended by the surgeon general.

Our school districts are making deals with soft drink companies and putting vending machines in schools. The fast food industry promotes bigger sizes, better value.

Improving the health and well-being of Oregonians will take the collaborative effort of families, schools, worksites, media, government and communities. The first step is shifting the primary reason for weight loss and exercise from appearance to health. The second is figuring out what you can do about it.



Dr. Grant Higginson

Families can reduce the amount of time they watch television, prepare and eat more meals together and plan activities that provide exercise and enjoyment. Communities can develop safe places for their members to walk and ride bikes.

Schools should ensure that they are providing healthful food and sensible portions. And they should provide culturally appropriate education about healthy eating habits and regular physical activity.

More than 100 million of us spend the majority of our day at a worksite. Employers should establish worksite exercise facilities or create incentives for employees to join local fitness centers. They can help curtail the endless parade of unhealthy food appearing at workstations and reception counters everywhere, and encourage employees to share healthier snacks with their co-workers.

Oregon employers are spending huge amounts of money on health insurance and racking up an estimated \$1 billion in hospital costs attributable to obesity, so these steps make good business sense.

The good news is that 50 percent of the risk of developing chronic disease and dying prematurely is posed by something we can change. Even modest weight loss — 5 to 15 percent of total body weight — reduces risk factors for conditions such as cardiovascular disease.

By modifying our environments and behaviors to promote healthier eating and increased physical activity, we can extend lives, save money and improve the quality of life for thousands of Oregonians.

Grant Higginson, M.D., is the state public health officer in the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Not only have talented Blacks sold billions of tickets. They even invented the machine that dispenses the tickets.



The ticket dispensing machine, was invented by Frederick Jones, June 27, 1939, US Patent 2,163,754 • Dry cleaning process for clothes, Thomas Jennings, (First African American to receive a US Patent) March 3, 1821, US Patent 3,306X • Folding cabinet bed, Sarah Goode, (First African American woman to receive a US Patent) July 14, 1885, US Patent 322,117 • Urinalysis machine, Dewey Sanderson, July 28, 1970, US Patent 3,522,011 • Keyboard stand, J. Harding & B. Hirschenson, Feb. 23, 1993, US Patent 5,188,321 • Steam boiler furnace, Granville Woods, June 3, 1884, US Patent 299,894 • Laser surgery process for cataracts, Patricia Bath, MD, July 6, 1999, US Patent 5,919,186 • Fire escape ladder, Joseph Winters, May 7, 1878, US Patent 203,517 • Wrench, John Johnson, April 18, 1922, US Patent 1,413,322 • Disposable syringe, Phil Brooks, Apr. 9, 1974, US Patent 3,802,434 • Home security with TV surveillance, Marie V.B. Brown, Dec. 2, 1969, US Patent 3,482,037 • Automatic safety break system, Richard Spikes, Jan. 2, 1962, US Patent 3,015,522 • Street sweeper, Charles Brooks, Mar. 17, 1896, US Patent 556,711 • Map, Thomas Stewart, June 13, 1893, US Patent 499,402 • Electric heater, Ebert Stallworth, Oct. 16, 1928, US Patent 1,687,521 • Fitted bed sheet, Bertha Berman, Oct. 6, 1959, US Patent 2,907,055 • Oil stove, John Standard, Oct. 29, 1889, US Patent 413,689 • Stair-climbing wheelchair, Rufus Weaver, Nov. 19, 1968, US Patent 3,411,598 • Automatic pressure cooker & smoker, Maurice Lee, Sept. 29, 1959, US Patent 2,906,191 • Vehicular restraint system, Leslie Jones, Sept. 12, 1972, US Patent 3,690,695

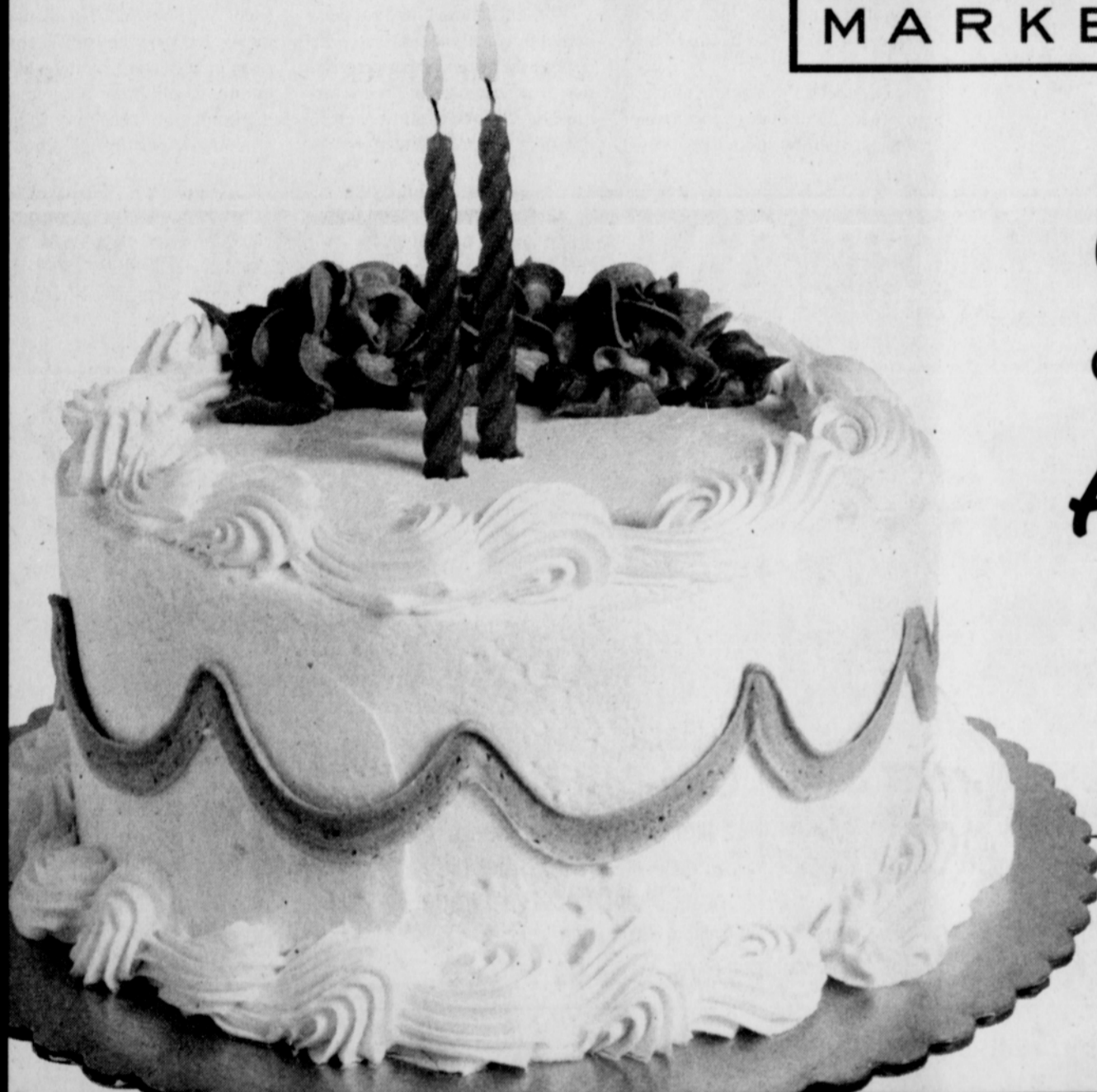
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