

HEALTH

Leave a Legacy of Health, Not Just Wealth

For Your Health



BY DR. RANI WHITFIELD

The current state of our economy has raised questions about whether today's kids will be better or worse off than their parents. But, as a physician and father, I question whether they will be healthy enough to even live longer than their parents.

Today, more physicians than ever are treating children for "adult" diseases like diabetes, hypertension and even heart disease. So, we should be equally concerned about the future of their health as we are about their wealth.

This Black History Month and Heart Health Month, I urge you to start a family legacy of good health. The future of our children depends on it.

It's no secret that heart disease, obesity and diabetes are taking a toll on our families and our commu-

nities at a rate higher than any other ethnic group in the country. And it is mostly preventable.

As a father to a six-year-old, I know "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work when kids are watching and mimicking you every move. Therefore, as parents, we have to take the first steps toward building a healthy, active lifestyle for ourselves, with hopes that our kids will "do as we do."

Contrary to what you might think, taking those steps doesn't mean cutting out the things you enjoy. Doing that can actually lead to weight gain. To be honest, I'm not giving up my favorite foods and beverages, and neither should you. It's really about making better deci-

sions.

If you use two sticks of butter in your famous peach cobbler, use one or a healthier butter substitute. If you use salt pork in collard greens, try smoked turkey instead. If you love soda, try a low- or no-calorie version or drink from a smaller cup.

Another problem I often see in my practice is the idea that kids need to "clean their plate." This was once a good rule, but now that we are feeding our children adult-sized portions, it can be dangerous.

With my daughter, I allow her to decide when she's full, clean plate or not, because kids are good at saying when they've had enough. So, next time you sit down to dinner, put a little less on your child's plate and listen when they tell you they're full. It might also help you rethink the amount on your plate, too.

Lastly, family time shouldn't only be TV time. Get up and be active together.

If your kids are jumping around with their Wii game, join them. If they're playing tag in the backyard, be "it." One thing I love to do with my daughter is dance because it's good exercise and lets us be silly together.

Leaving a legacy of good health doesn't have to be serious and boring, so have fun with it.

This isn't a letter of "shoulda, coulda, woulda" because I understand food is a cultural and satisfying experience. Rather, it is a challenge for you to take inventory of your family's health habits and make small adjustments that could bring about big changes.

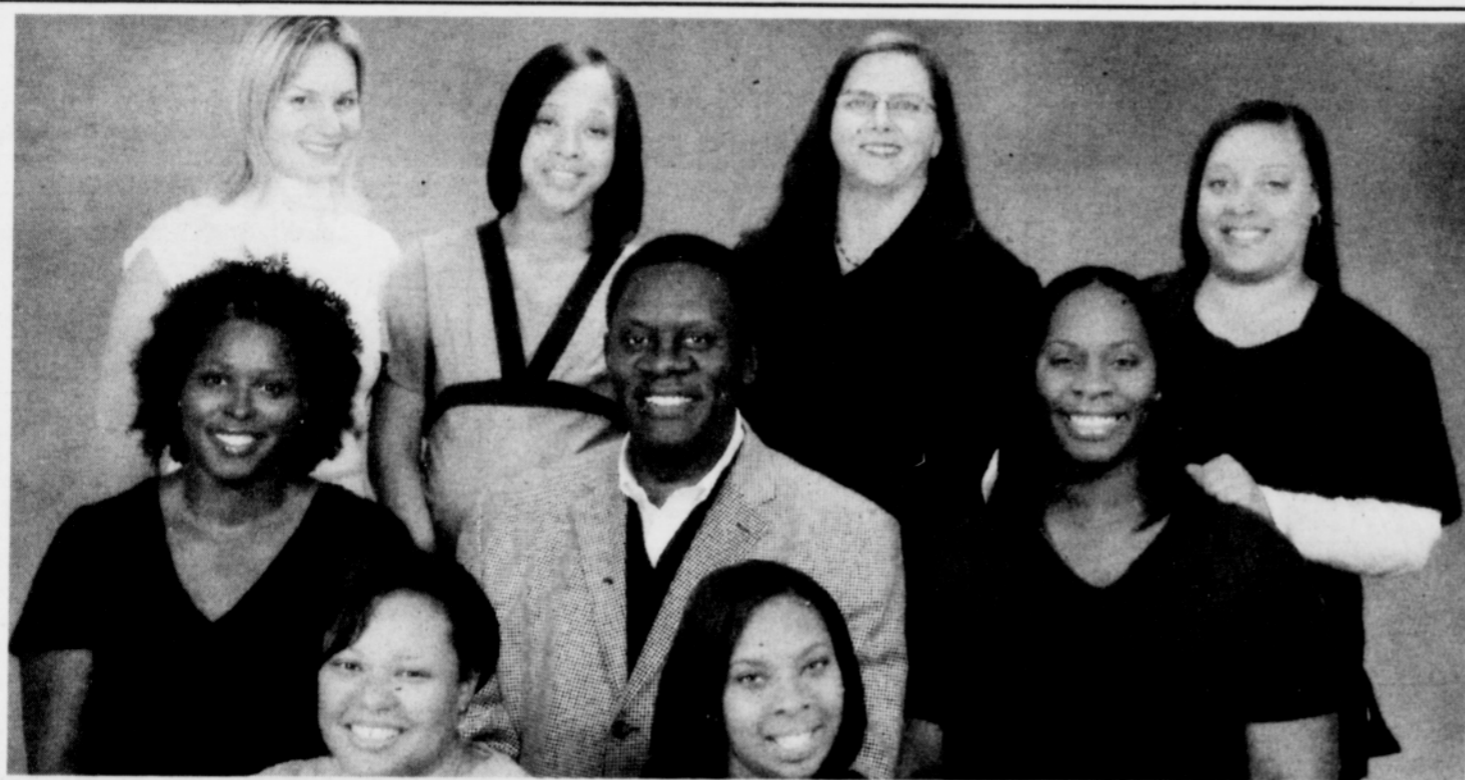
Studies show that just a small weight loss can reduce the risk of

heart disease, diabetes and other diseases.

So this month, and year round, I'm taking a pledge, and I hope you will too: I pledge to leave my daughter with better health habits than the generation before her. I will leave her with less risk for heart disease, diabetes and obesity. I will be active for her and with her. And I will make decisions that set her on the path to good health for the rest of her life.

Good luck creating your family's good health legacy for this generation and the next.

Dr. Rani G. Whitfield, known best as "The Hip Hop Doc," is a board certified family physician with a private practice in Baton Rouge, La.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers (above center) and his skilled staff are ready to help those in need.

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Q: I have been having a lot of pain in my neck. The doctor said that it was osteoarthritis and that I would have learn to live with it. What is your opinion?

A: As you might know, there is a tremendous amount of health research going on today. Much relates to the spine and nervous system. You might ask your doctor if he has read the latest study on osteoarthritis. The study showed that there was no correlation between the amount of osteo-arthritis and the amount of pain a person suffers. In fact it

has been found that pain and osteoarthritis are both caused by the same problem. Mechanical stress on the bone and joints is the biggest cause of pain and also the cause of that deformity of the joint your doctor calls osteoarthritis.

In Chiropractic we evaluate where the joint and bones are

stresses. Our chief purpose then is to remove the stress or irritation from the joint (and nerves) – not only to reduce pain but to allow the bones to be as healthy as possible as well. If you have joint pain, isn't it time you stepped up to , effective Chiropractic?

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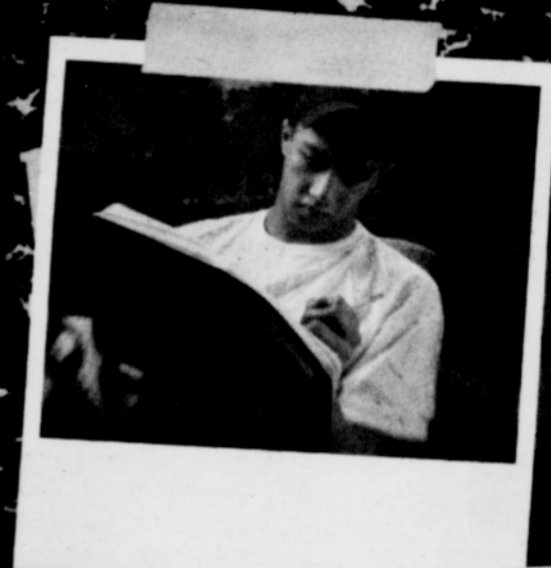
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Adapted by Jacques Woodley from her book *Locomotion*. This play was originally staged by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.