

## To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



### A Visionary Approach to Providing Health Care to Underserved Communities.

What began as a conversation to look at possible solutions to addressing a critical need for more healthcare professionals in rural and underserved communities developed into the Pacific Northwest's first new medical school in 60 years. Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences (PNWU), in Yakima, Washington, opened its doors to its first class of 75 Medical students on August 4, 2008.

The mission is to train, educate and encourage scientific research for health professionals who will provide quality care to all communities of the Pacific Northwest, particularly underserved

communities with populations less than 20,000. The goal is to train 75 new primary care physicians per year; they are off to a great start with the first class of students finishing their first year of training recently.

I had the privilege of spending time at the school a few weeks ago. I was impressed by the quality of the faculty, which included practicing allopathic and osteopathic physicians. The school has state of the art equipment and is located in an area where they can expand as they grow. What is most impressive is the vision and commitment, of everyone involved, to train a new generation of doctors who will serve the needs of those living in the non-urban communities and rural areas of Alaska, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Five million people are considered at risk in the underserved populations in these regions. In Washington alone, 36 of 39 counties are considered underserved populations. The focus of PNWU will be on improving overall health through prevention rather than a disease approach model. The goal is to create a collaborative model that teams physicians, physician assistants, nurses and other allied health professionals who will work together to create better health outcomes for patients.

We need change in our health care system. We are all aware that it is broken and inadequate. Our current system is not working. The rates of obesity and chronic medical problems have increased dramatically. These health issues are exacerbated in areas without adequate healthcare resources.

This is an exciting and visionary path to educating our future health care professionals and will have a significant impact on the health and well being of many individuals and communities in the Pacific Northwest. This is a big first step towards creating healthier communities and bringing positive change to our current healthcare climate. The goal to improve the overall physical and mental health in these communities is timely and long overdue.

We will keep you posted on this from time to time. As always, you can contact us at The Independent, at health@the-independent.net.

### Psoriasis information on August 8

Join the National Psoriasis Foundation and Andrew Blauvelt, M.D., for a thought-provoking event, "Psoriasis: More Than Skin Deep." You'll learn about treatment options, how to advocate for the treatments

you need and live successfully with psoriasis. The event also includes a complimentary breakfast.

This free event begins at 9:00 a.m. August 8, at the Portland Marriott City Center, Willamette Columbia Room, 520 SW Broadway, Portland.

For more information or to RSVP, go to [www.psoriasis.org/morethanskindeep](http://www.psoriasis.org/morethanskindeep) or call 800-723-9166.

## Summer is time to walk to health

Don't let this summer's heat melt your resolve to be physically active.

You can get started and stay motivated throughout the warm season – with health and safety tips from the American Heart Association's Start! Summer Walking Guide.

The free guide, available at [www.startpdx.org](http://www.startpdx.org), includes stretching techniques and tips on what to wear, when and where to walk, and what to eat before and after you walk. For example, it's best to pick a time that you can regularly commit to all summer. It's also best to avoid walking early in the afternoon, when the sun is at its strongest and you're at the greatest risk for heat stroke. You can also walk in the mall, join a gym or walk in a building at work.

The American Heart Association encourages walking – ideally for at least 30 minutes a

day – because it's free, accessible and easy.

"Walking helps combat obesity, a major risk factor for heart disease, the nation's No. 1 killer", said Maureen Mays, M.D., M.S., Director of Preventive Cardiology at Oregon Health & Science University. "The Start! Summer Walking Guide helps people kick up their walking programs and is full of helpful tips and walking stretches to get you off on the right foot".

To get the free Start! Summer Walking Guide, downloadable walking plans, tips and trackers and a community of "sole mates" to help you stay on track, call 503-233-0100 or visit [startpdx.org](http://startpdx.org).

Start! is sponsored locally by Oregon Health & Science University and nationally by SUBWAY® Restaurants, Healthy Choice® and AstraZeneca.

## Seniors: Get help to buy produce

Almost 25,000 low-income Oregon seniors are getting help to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers markets and farm stands, but some 17,000 additional seniors are eligible but haven't signed up yet, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services. State officials are urging eligible seniors not to miss their window of opportunity and sign up before the September 15 deadline.

"We want to make sure every eligible senior knows that there is help available to ensure they are getting fresh and healthy local produce," says Lauren Mitchell, who helps oversee the program.

The state has sent more than 42,000 eligible Oregon seniors invitations to participate in the federally funded Oregon Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program, which runs annually from June 1 to October 31, and would like to make sure all seniors know about the benefit. To be eligible, seniors must have turned 60 by April 1, 2009, receive Food Stamps or Medicaid, have a monthly income below \$1038 for an individual, and live in their own home or rental unit.

"Those who sign and return the letter to DHS by Sept. 15 will receive farm direct checks

that can be used at any participating farm stand or farmer's market in Oregon through the end of October," says Mitchell.

Participants also receive information on authorized farm stands and farmers markets in their area and nutritional information, including recipes and tips to healthy eating.

"This is one of our most popular programs, and it really is a win-win for seniors and local farmers," says Mitchell. "Everyone who is eligible should sign and return the letter, and enjoy the benefits of fresh produce and healthy eating."

The program, now in its sixth year, is administered by DHS in partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Public Health Division.

"Some of the comments I've received have been heartwarming," says Mitchell. "I heard from an 80-year-old woman who credits her and her 90-year-old husband's longevity to a diet high in fruits and vegetables, and I've heard from many seniors who say the program lets them buy fresh produce they normally can't afford."

For more information on the program, contact your local office serving seniors and people with disabilities <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/localoffices/index.shtml>.

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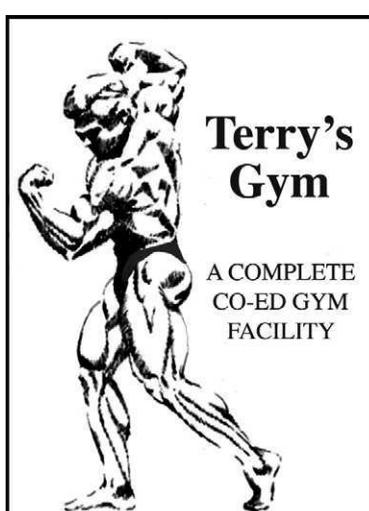
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