



SERA, INC. 8 WEEK EDUCATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

As part of our Health and Wellness Programming, SERA Inc. is beginning its 8 (eight) week Health and Wellness Education Workshop: “Mind & Body Wellness Project (MBW)”. This project is part of our Integrative Health Center aptly named “The People’s Integrative Health Center”. Within the center’s sphere of influence are several initiatives that focus on the health and wellbeing of the whole person including but not limited to our Dancing in the Park 8 week exercise project, our Blood Pressure Monitoring project, our Community Gardening Project, and our MBW project which provides services using a coaching approach.

These endeavors all work toward creating self-care opportunities for the populations we serve who suffer from states of dis-ease and despondency stemming from sedentary lifestyles, poor nutritional choices, low self-esteem, and lack of access to resources which promote healthy living. We believe that “Self-care is Healthcare” and therein lies the core of our health and wellness programming.

SERA, Inc.'s current geographic reach is the approximately 85,000 residents living in Southeast Raleigh. Approximately 73 percent of the population served is African American and 7.5 percent of the population is Hispanic. Southeast Raleigh faces high rates of poverty and unemployment, low education levels and low asset values. Fifty-two percent of its residents live below the poverty line, the unemployment rate in Southeast Raleigh is considerably higher compared to Wake County as a whole; and the graduation rate for minorities are lower than their counterparts. These conditions are not ideal to be successful in setting goals around health and wellness.

Obesity and feelings of despair and depression are a constant for both adults and children in North Carolina. According to recent data from “NC’s Plan to Address Obesity”, more than 2/3 of adults in North Carolina are overweight or obese, and an estimated 30% of children between the ages of 10-17 in North Carolina are overweight or obese. A number of factors influence health status and can contribute to poor health or disease among adults and children in low wealth communities. These include race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (i.e. income, education and the availability of social and individual supports), as well as factors beyond their control including the unhealthy habits they pick up from those around them, and the lack of access to health resources (i.e. healthy foods,

well-stocked supermarkets, a safe and accessible place to exercise, opportunities for health and wellness coaching).

Through our Mind and Body Health and Wellness workshops we will provide residents with techniques to assist in creating conditions for wellness in mind and body. We will then work with residents to identify issues that keep them from reaching their personal and health goals, and then work via a coaching approach to develop a plan to address each of the barriers that keep them from living optimally. During the 8 week sessions, residents will have an opportunity to share their presenting issues with their neighbors and friends and make progress with those neighbors and friends toward becoming clear about the direction they want their lives to take. In addition to peer to peer discussion, several of the sessions focus on mindful eating, stopping emotional eating, and building a sense of hopefulness and goal setting.

When we consider the high rates of obesity, overweight and as a result of such, diseases such as stroke, diabetes, cancer, heart disease etc., we believe the services we are providing through our center are timely as we watch our communities struggle with sickness and disease, resulting in lives that are not lived optimally and that suffer from a sense of hopelessness and despair. Socrates has said, “The unexamined life is not worth living” (Maslow, 1998, p. 10).

Health/Wellness group work and coaching in many ways can be the catalyst to examining one’s life in a productive and non-judgmental way and making necessary changes to begin to live a long, healthy and productive life. Although the definitions of wellness are bountiful and diverse, it appears that practitioners in the field of life and wellness coaching have reached considerable consensus around some components of a wellness definition. For example, Arloski (2007) an expert in wellness implementation and strategy, states “wellness is a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential. It is multi-dimensional and holistic—encompassing such factors as lifestyle, and mental well-being as well as the environment; it is positive and affirmative” (p. 12). John Travis (1994), also an expert in the field of wellness, posited, “Wellness is a choice, a way of life, a process, an efficient channeling of energy, an integration of mind and body and a loving acceptance of self” (p. 13). These definitions will be at the center of how we work with our residents.

The Integrative Mind, Body Health and Wellness 8 Week sessions will empower patients by encouraging them to play an active role in their journey to health. These type of workshops have received significant scientific and popular attention in the last few decades as a result of its increasing acceptance by the general population and the health care system. The focus is on preventative self-care as crucial to optimal health. Mind, Body

interventions function as adjuvant interventions for a variety of health conditions and disease prevention (Moura, 2012).

The center and all its projects speak to the issues of access to healthy resources by providing services that are cost effective. All services are provided on a sliding-fee scale. If residents cannot afford to pay, they do not pay. The value of this 8 week program nationally is over \$2,500.00. We are providing the same caliber of program to Southeast Raleigh at a maximum cost of 30.00 a session (again, according to a sliding fee scale).

The workshops will be facilitated by trained SERA, Inc. staff and certified licensed volunteers. Rita Anita Linger, SERA's President and CEO is a PhD Candidate in Integrative Health and Medicine, with training and licensure in Mind Body Medicine, Health and Wellness Coaching, Bio Feedback, Psycho-physiology and Integrative Health. Trained and licensed volunteers include, Deeanna Burleson, RN, MPA, UNC Integrative Health Program, Yalem Kiros, RN, Dr. Claire Wheeler - MD, Maurice Smalls - Master Gardener. The evidence-based strategies and techniques that will be implemented are primarily based on the internationally prestigious Center for Mind Body Medicine, run by Dr. James Gordon, located in Washington, DC and the world renowned Institute of HeartMath, founded by Dr. Doc Childre, located in Boulder Creek, CA. Both institutions are researched-based entities.

Separate 8 week sessions will be held for adults and children.