

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Healthy, Well-Nourished Population Bone Builders

Issue

It is estimated that one out of every two women over 50 will develop osteoporosis. Older men have also been identified as possibly at risk. This silent disease weakens bones, eventually causing fractures, disability and loss of quality of life for millions of people, especially the elderly. It is the number two reason for women's admissions into nursing homes. More than 28 million Americans who have osteoporosis or at high risk because of low bone mass; eighty percent of those affected are women. Although osteoporosis is both treatable and preventable, studies show that awareness is quite low among the U.S. population. Simple changes in diet and exercise can improve calcium levels in the body and strengthen bones before osteoporosis occurs.

With the large baby boom generation now moving into the beginning life stage susceptible to osteoporosis, education and prevention is more important than ever.

What has been done?

A collaborative program called "Bone Builders" was developed as part of the University of Arizona partnership between Cooperative

Extension in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the UA College of Public Health. The program brings together several public and private partners to reduce risk for osteoporosis among women statewide ages 35-55 by increasing their awareness of the risks of osteoporosis and ways to prevent it from developing. The program recruits and retains community peer educators who teach local, community classes, and seeks to identify high risk women in each community and encourage them to get basic x-ray or ultrasound screening for bone density.

In 2000, eight of Arizona's 15 counties had Bone Builders programs; more are on the way. Since the project began, 80 volunteers have been trained in Maricopa County alone, and 53 from other counties, including Apache, Gila, Pima, Pinal, Mohave, Yuma, and Santa Cruz. An updated web site, was developed. In 1999-2000 the Bone Builders program was taught to hundreds of community groups statewide, with 5813 people participating.

Bone Builders displays were at 68 health fairs, community fair, health spa, two statewide conferences and communities libraries directly teaching more than 3100 women.

Impact

Bone Builders partners screened 1143 women in 2000 with ultrasound technology on a volunteer basis. More than 50,000 Like Mother, Like Daughter flyers and 2000 posters have been distributed through businesses, doctor offices, day care centers, churches, schools districts, Women's Expo and numerous women's groups. More than 500,000 women have been reached through feature media articles and TV segments.

In Maricopa County, Bone Builder education volunteers rated the training curriculum 4.7 (out of 5 point schedule with 5 excellent) and the total training as 4.8 (out of 5 point schedule with 5 excellent and 0 being poor.)

Participants rated their knowledge before the training as 3.1 and as a result of the training 4.6 (out of 5 point schedule with 5 high). Members of the public taking the education classes taught by the volunteers in 2000 rated their knowledge as an average of 2.41 before the sessions and after the classes an average of 4.5 (out of 5 point schedule with 5 high). The number of hits on the Bone Builders web site averaged 750-800 users per month.

Funding

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