

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; 80 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.

Funding

UA Cooperative Extension
UA College of Public Health
County Department of Public Health Services
Dairy Council of Arizona
Arizona Osteoporosis Coalition
Banner Health Arizona
Phoenix Center for Clinical Research
Arizona Department of Health Services
St. Luke's Health Initiative
Arizona Nutrition Network

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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 statewide among women over 25 and men over 65 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 fall 2001, new funding allowed Bone Builders to concentrate more time teaching food stamp eligible women. An updated web site, was developed. Bone Builders displays were featured at health fairs, community fairs, health spas, statewide conferences and community libraries.

Impact

Bone Builders partners screened 1521 women in 2002 with ultrasound technology on a volunteer basis. Over the 3 years of funding, more than 198 volunteers and staff were trained. Ten county projects taught 12,916 people in 447 classes; 107 health fairs taught 22,595 people; and 1724 people received one-on-one instruction. A total of one million people were reached with education, materials, displays and media. A sample of 1513 class participants statewide rated their class as 4.5 (out of 5 point schedule with 5 excellent).