

Residents encouraged to shape up

By CHARLES W. JOHNSON
*News Editor for the Southern Standard
 (McMinnville, Tenn.)*

A free health and wellness seminar was held Saturday at the First United Methodist Church Outreach Building as part of a series of informational programs the church will be sponsoring in the coming months.

Registered dietitian Brandi Cox, chief clinical dietitian at River Park Hospital, conducted the seminar which provided free blood pressure checks and body mass index measurements, as well as information on how to lose weight and improve general health without using fad diets.

"This is about promoting a healthier you in 2009," Cox said. "This is not about dieting per se. I'm just going to give some tips on how to improve your health, such as some weight loss tips, eating lots of fiber, more fruits and vegetables, reducing your fats, that type of thing."

Considering Tennessee ranks 47th in the nation in overall health, Cox says residents really need to consider some lifestyle changes, but with the current economic conditions may not be able to afford a structured program or visits to a gym.

"Right now we're seeing some declines in people having the money to go out and start new programs," Cox said. "What I want to do is encourage some tips on things that are easy to do."

Cox says changing eating habits, performing simple exercises, and starting a walking regimen can really make a difference.

"They don't have to go out and start an expensive program," Cox said. "It just takes some small changes and then that becomes a lifestyle change, not a diet. My goal is to stay away from the word diet."

Cox provided a handout that offered a number of general tips from the American Dietetic Association:

- Eat at least three times per day.
- Pay attention to your body. When you feel like you have had enough to eat, stop. Quit before you feel full stuffed, or sick from eating.



Charles W. Johnson photo
Registered dietitian Brandi Cox of River Park Hospital, right, goes over body mass index figures with Mary DeKort during a health and wellness seminar sponsored by First United Methodist Church.

- If you still feel hungry or unsatisfied after a meal or snack, wait at least 10 minutes before you have more food. Often the craving will go away.

- Drink plenty of calorie-free drinks (water, tea, coffee, diet soda). You may be thirsty, not hungry.

- Pick lean meats, low-fat or nonfat cheese, and skim (non-fat) or 1-percent fat milk instead of higher fat, higher calorie choices.

- Get plenty of fiber. Vegetables, fruits and whole grains are good sources. Have a high-fiber cereal every day.

- Cut back on sugar. For example, drink less fruit juice and regular soda.

- Limit the amount of alcohol (beer, wine and liquor) you drink.

In addition to changing eating habits, Cox says an exercise program is a vital part of improving general health.

"With exercise you're going to see faster weight loss so

you'll stay more motivated," Cox said. "It's going to increase your heart rate and help with high blood pressure and heart disease, diabetes. It



DEBBIE YOUNG

is very beneficial."

Church missions coordinator Debbie Young, a registered nurse, says she organized the health and wellness seminar as a service to the community.

"We here at First United Methodist just felt like we wanted to do something for the whole community," Young said. "It's an opportunity to help them start the new year with some positive goals. We're hoping to do a program once monthly on different topics to help with health and wellness and general well-being."

Later this month, Dr. Debbie Watlington will present a seminar on stress and stress relief. This program will be held Saturday, Feb. 21 from 10-11 a.m.

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