

The Delaware Cancer Consortium Retreat:

The Role of Sport and Physical Activity in Cancer Prevention

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On Tuesday, April 25, 2017, the Delaware Cancer Consortium held a retreat at the Dover Downs Hotel & Casino. This all day event brought attention to physical activity in children and the role it plays in preventing cancer. A wide variety of locally and nationally renowned speakers expressed support to increase the physical activity of both children and adults in an effort to increase the health of Delawareans of all ages.

The day began with Secretary of Health and Social Services Kara Odom Walker, M.D. Dr. Walker reminded the audience that physical activity is known to help many different health conditions, including cardiovascular health and people with chronic diseases, as well as cancer. Professor I-Min Lee, MD, MPH, ScD, epidemiologist with the Harvard School of Public Health, taught the audience that health behaviors track over a lifetime: the more active a child is, the more likely they will be active as an adult. She also discussed her research, Association of Leisure-Time Physical Activity with Risk of 26 Types of Cancer in 1.44 Million Adults, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2016. She and her co-authors concluded that the risk of 13 of the 26 cancers could be reduced by increasing a subject's physical activity.

The morning's keynote speaker was Mr. Tom Farrey, Executive Director of the Sports and Society Program with the Aspen Institute. Mr. Farrey tasked the audience with reimagining the concept of "sport" to include all children, no matter their age, gender, or level of ability. This reimagining seeks to increase every 12 year old's ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active. Each of these components will give children the foundation to be active for life, thus decreasing their future risk of cancer.

The Honorable Bethany Hall-Long, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Delaware incited the audience to continue working to prevent cancer in the population of the First State, and reminded everyone that getting children interested in exercise and physical activity is half the battle.

Irene Cucina, DPE, past-president of the SHAPE America program discussed how important having physical education and physical activity was to children, and discussed how it was possible to achieve the national standards of 60 minutes of physical activity per day per child in Delaware.

Over lunch, the audience was treated to video testimonials about the importance of cancer screenings.

After lunch, the Honorable John C. Carney, Governor of the State of Delaware tasked the audience with increasing the physical activity of all children in Delaware. He reminded everyone that just because Delaware was small, did not mean that it could not get things accomplished.

Mary Puckett, PhD, of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control of the CDC taught the audience about some of the best practices regarding including physical activity and exercise into a child's school day.

A panel discussion wrapped up the afternoon, with Deborah Bagatta Bowles (YMCA), Madeline Bayard (Rodel Foundation), Deb Buenaga (Preston's March for Energy), and Jennifer Robbins, MD (Nemours AI DuPont Hospital) taking questions from the audience about different types of programs and options available for Delaware schools and children.

Finally, Karyl T. Rattay, MD, MS, Director of the Division of Public Health, Delaware Health and Social Services gave the audience their call to action: to take everything presented at the retreat and use it in the best of their abilities to increase the physical activity levels of the children and adults, in order to create a healthier, happier Delaware.

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