

70-Somethin' Former Restaurateur Shows Sisters Half Her Age How to Live Younger

by: Barbara Clint

SUMMARY

The Vel's Healthy YOU Institute's "Train the Trainer" initiative is developing a cadre of trusted community spokespersons and trainers capable of bridging the gap between Cleveland's rapidly growing local foods movement and the African American community. Program graduates will fulfill a variety of roles ranging from fundraising and publicity to teaching community-based healthy eating classes. The majority of participants were hand-selected by Vel based on their passion for healthy eating and trusted status in the community.



CHALLENGE

African American women face higher risk for chronic disease than the general population, a fact that has been well documented. High rates of obesity and lower prevention behaviors are known to be contributing factors and many worthwhile efforts are underway in Cleveland, Ohio to address them: electronic benefits-linked farmers markets have proliferated to make purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables affordable; social support networks for

physical activity such as Black Girls Run are on the rise; neighborhood-based free fitness classes are growing. Yet underlying risk factors remain intractable. The demands of family life when working multiple, low-paying jobs, dealing with unreliable transportation and coping with sub-standard housing conditions produce increased stress levels and, often, depression. For far too many, healthier living seems more of a dream than an achievable reality.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Vel Scott's passion and purpose is educating people in how to live their best lives by powering their bodies with healthy food. But she cannot do this important work alone. The Vel Scott's Healthy YOU Institute is looking for passionate individuals who not only want to improve their own eating practices but also those of their families and the broader community. Visit her Facebook page to see when the next training session is beginning: <https://www.facebook.com/VelScottHealthyYou/?fref=ts>.

"Vel has the special gift of quiet leadership; she speaks gently and suddenly an entire neighborhood is mobilized! What wonders she's accomplished in teaching Cleveland neighbors to grow and enjoy healthy food! Thank you Vel!"

- Bernadette LaGuardia

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SOLUTION

The Vel Scott's Healthy YOU Institute's "Train the Trainer" program empowers participants to see themselves as healthier and equips them both to realize their vision and commit to share what they've learned within their respective communities. Led by 70-somethin' entrepreneur Vel Scott, a revered, former restaurateur with decades of instruction experience, participants learn not only through hands-on cooking demonstrations but also through visits to yoga studios and trips to the local thrift store in search of affordable kitchen basics. Vel infuses kitchen-based instruction with positive imagery, deep-breathing and stretching exercises, pushing participants well outside their comfort zones.

RESULTS

With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a total of 25 participants learned how to shop, cook and eat healthier, even when on a tight budget, and how to effectively share what they've learned with other members of their community. Through the CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, two, six-week, 18-hour Vel Scott's Healthy YOU sessions were offered, followed by a three-week, 9-hour, "Train-the-Trainer" session taught by a CHES-certified public health professional. Participants completed pre- and post-surveys and conveyed greatly increased knowledge of healthy cooking and eating practices. They also contributed video testimonials relaying their most important class take-aways and outlined an engagement plan for program graduates to reach the broader community.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Vel Scott's Healthy YOU "Train the Trainer" program successfully engaged 25 African American women, some who had previously participated in healthy cooking classes, and deepened their understanding of "healthy eating." Program content was infused not only with tips on how to make commonly eaten foods healthier but also on integrating raw foods into the diet, juicing and the role of food in the African American culture. The relationship between food choices and emotions was explored and stress management was practiced throughout the course. "Train the Trainer" sessions discussed leadership characteristics and community engagement strategies and graduates committed to share what they learned within their circles in the larger community.