

*The Rockford File*

# Pilgrim Baptist Church Starts CHIP



## *A healthier lifestyle program begins pilot class*

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Rockford Register Star, May 7, 2002

SHURICE HUNTER BEGINS changing her life today. She joins 32 other residents hoping to improve their health through a program that has already helped workers in local companies.

Hunter will coordinate the Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP) at Pilgrim Baptist Church where she works as the pastor's assistant. She will also participate in the pilot eight-week class that begins today.

### **New Perspective**

Hunter has no specific health problems but did have gestational diabetes when she was pregnant. She wants to take healthy habits to her sons as well "so they can have a better life."

Her voice cannot hide her excitement as she talks about the program.

"I am very excited about starting the program because of all the things I will learn. You're supposed to leave the CHIP program with a whole new perspective of what foods to buy, how to prepare them, how

much to eat of them, and how to enjoy healthy foods. It's a whole new life system."

### **CHIP Program**

CHIP encourages men and women to adopt lifestyle changes to become healthier. It is based at the SwedishAmerican Center for Complementary Medicine locally and counts 40,000 graduates—including 4,500 in Rockford—in North America.

Last year, 450 employees at six "guinea pig" companies, ranging from Woodward Governor to Ingersoll to DaimlerChrysler, reported that they had enjoyed significant short-term health improvements after the program. The scientific results will be published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (see pages 27-35).

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CHIP leaders joined the local YMCA to write a grant to pay for the pilot program. The SwedishAmerican Medical Foundation and Community Foundation of Northern Illinois shared the \$15,000 grant allowing the 33 participants to join for free. Normally, the eight-week CHIP session costs \$295 each.

#### CHIP Program Description

Peter Vedro, CHIP executive consultant at the SwedishAmerican Center for Complementary Medicine, hopes that the pilot success will “attract more funding. Hopefully, we will be able to receive some state and federal grants to expand the program.”

The program focuses on risk factors associated with heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and certain cancers through healthy habits and lifestyle changes, such as diet changes, daily exercise and quitting smoking.

“This is the same program that we have implemented successfully in different companies in the Rockford area,” Vedro said. “The only difference is, that in this particular case, we’re focusing on a faith-based community of African-Americans through the Pilgrim Baptist Church.”

### Barbara Richardson

#### CHIP Profile

Barbara Richardson completed the CHIP program in October. She lost 30 pounds. She says, “The program doesn’t just end in eight weeks. It is a change in lifestyle for life.”

#### About the CHIP Course

Participants attend an eight-week course, including 40 hours of video and instruction, pre- and post-medical analysis, and a complete lifestyle evaluation. They receive the CHIP manual, text- and workbook. Students are taught to shop for healthy groceries, learn to read and understand package labels, and cook food in a healthy way.

#### CHIP Results

CHIP results published in medical journals report cholesterol reductions averaging 15-20%, weight loss of 6 to 8 pounds, and coronary risk reduction average from 65 to 85% in 4 to 8 weeks!

Barbara Richardson, a support technician at SwedishAmerican Hospital, went through the CHIP course in October. “It has been fantastic,” she said. “I have arthritic knees and since I joined the program they haven’t bothered me anymore. My brother lost 50 pounds and he no longer has to take insulin. His diabetes has been ‘disarmed.’

“The best thing,” Richardson said, “is that the habits learned in CHIP seem to be contagious. “Once you notice that you are doing better, you want to keep on doing it more and more. And you find additional support in your fellow CHIP-mates.”