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Samantha Meservey

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MIDTOWN HEALTH ADVOCATE STOPS BLOGGING: WHERE IS SHE NOW?

BY SAMANTHA MESERVEY

NNB Student Reporter

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — In July of 2012 Ronnell Montgomery, a community leader in Midtown, started a weight loss blog titled "25 x 45"; her goal: lose 25 pounds by her 45th birthday.

Her last blog entry is dated "October 23, 2012" which means her 45th birthday has come and gone and her 46th is approaching quickly in November. The blog posts stopped before her birthday and readers have yet to find out whether she’s reached her goal.

Montgomery’s blog was created on the webpage of a Midtown organization called Churches United for Healthy Congregations (CUFHC). The webpage states that "CUFHC serves as a vehicle through which information can be disseminated to churches as well as other community organizations." Their main purpose is to promote health among the community members and bring awareness to popular health issues.

As a member of CUFHC, Montgomery saw her blog as a way to drive traffic to the organization’s site. Once viewers were hooked by the blog, the abundant amount of health information on the site would be easy to find.

“I'm a blog-addict,” Montgomery admits. “I thought it would be fun to have my own and make it personal.”

Montgomery’s strive to get healthy began before her involvement with CUFCH.

“It was after my father had a stroke,” she cringed. She realized that her family history played a large part in her health. Her father’s frequent illnesses, including multiple heart attacks, caused her to become conscious of her health decisions.

She received another wake-up call in 2011 when her daughter’s father died of a heart attack at the age of 46. Her blog details her emotions about his death and the realization that she needs to get her “butt in gear.”

“I want to be around to see my 13-year-old daughter grow up and have children of her own,” she blogs.

Montgomery’s health decisions include a fitness plan as well as making foods that are healthy and teen-friendly for her daughter.
“You know how teens are,” she explains. “They’re not into salads but if I use whole grain pasta with sauce on it [my daughter] doesn’t know the difference.”

Her daughter isn’t the only one she is helping to stay healthy; Montgomery is involved in numerous programs in Midtown that bring awareness to healthy lifestyles.

“I believe health is an issue everywhere,” she said. “There is nothing significantly different here.”

She said one thing that makes Midtown stand out is the plethora of resources available, including presence by the Moffitt Cancer Center, the American Heart Association, and the Pinellas County Health Department.

Cheryl Clinton, a representative of Sistahs Surviving Breast Cancer, a community support group associated with Mt. Zion Human Services, agrees that resources are plenty in Midtown. Her opinion, however, is that perhaps Midtown does need a little more help than others when it comes to health awareness.

“There are a lot of resources,” Clinton explains, “but resources are available where the needs are.”

Clinton is concerned that simply bringing awareness and support is not enough, knowing where to go for screening and treatment is important too. One program that is very helpful to Midtown is that women who lack insurance or are low-income are able to take part in the Pinellas County Health Department’s no-cost breast and cervical cancer screenings.

Both Clinton and Montgomery support these types of programs and share the urge to empower people to be aware of their health, especially women.

“What is important to me is that younger women embrace the health resources,” Montgomery expresses.

Montgomery’s favorite event to host is “Celebrate You,” an annual community forum exclusive to women held at the Sandelin Center in Midtown. The forum focuses on a different female related health topic each year, this year’s forum is focusing on HIV and AIDS.

“I’m really excited about this year,” Montgomery beamed. “The women love it!”

Montgomery is no doubt a role model for her daughter and the communities’ healthy habits, but the big question still remains: did she reach her goal and why did she stop blogging?

Montgomery realized how hard the blog was to keep up with, and learned a new appreciation for those bloggers she follows.

“I didn’t realize how time consuming it would be,” she said. “It was hard to keep it interesting and keep track of everything in order to share.”

Montgomery’s busy life caught up with her and she stopped blogging before she had reached her goal date.

Her plan began with dieting and exercise, and although the posts stopped Montgomery never stopped using healthy habits and calls the weight loss a “continuing journey.”

Montgomery does admit that the blog kept her more accountable for her progress but that she still tries to stick to healthier lifestyle choices.

Montgomery may have stopped blogging but she has not stopped influencing the Midtown community. The various programs she is involved with, as well as her support of other community programs all bring valuable health lessons and resources to Midtown residents.