

# Sound Wellness Alliance Network Promoting Health & Wellness for All

SWAN is a community-inspired endeavor focused on creating health and wellness for all residents. The organization came to be when the Providence Strategic Planning – STAY Committee started promoting healthy living with Providence employees. The momentum started and the group was so excited, they thought it would be a great idea to share their vision for healthy living with the entire community of Valdez.

“Inspiring people to live healthy and well is one of Providence Valdez Medical Center’s major objectives,” said Sean McCallister of Valdez Providence Medical Center. “SWAN was created to engage the community, tap into the wealth of experience and ideas that local residents and organizations have, and ensure the coalition and its programs are sustainable over time.”

In the summer of 2009 the Healthy Living Coalition was formed with numerous community organizations attending the first meeting. In the fall of 2009, the SWAN name, standing for Sound Wellness Alliance Network, was developed.

The vision of SWAN is to affect real and sustainable change in the health status of the community of Valdez. Their goals are to:

- Establish a baseline of health for individuals and community
- Secure funding
- Hire a coordinator
- Transform annual community health fair
- Roll out Know Your Numbers campaign
- Offer complimentary biometric screening
- Develop website and health portal
- Bolster and support existing healthy living activities/events



**Are you ignoring your own warning lights?**

When your car's warning lights indicate trouble, it gets your attention. Do you know that you have warning lights that can indicate potential trouble with your health?

If you don't know your personal health numbers, it's probably time for you to consider getting a check-up. Understanding how your numbers compare to recommended levels is a smart step to take control of your health!

**Know Your Numbers:**

Recommended levels:	
Blood Pressure	<120/80
Blood Sugar Level	<100
Total Cholesterol	<200
Body Mass Index	18.5–25

**Above:** A flyer promoting the Know Your Numbers Program. **Left:** Race participants for 5K Bite Back Run in Valdez June 7. Photos Courtesy of SWAN

Funding for SWAN initiatives comes from a grant from Providence Health and Services Alaska. SWAN applied for and secured \$100,000 for the community of Valdez. According to McCallister, “Providence is serious about developing sustainable health and wellness programs in the communities it serves. The grant is based on what Providence calls Community Benefit Strategic Investment and it infuses money earmarked for health and wellness initiatives into the communities of Valdez, Seward, Kodiak, and Anchorage.”

The SWAN coalition is made up of representatives from 17 local businesses and organizations, but anyone can become a member. All are invited and encouraged to attend. SWAN is being presented formally to interested organizations around Valdez during the summer and fall of 2010. A Core Team has become a leadership/decision making group that meets every other week. This team is made up of representatives from Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, Parks and Recreation, Providence Valdez Medical Center, Valdez City Schools, and Valdez Medical Center.

Because SWAN is a coalition of community members, they get to help set the goals and drive the focus of the organization. One of the biggest initiatives is the 2010 Healthy Living Expo scheduled for September 14. This

event will replace the health and safety fair of the past with a completely different focus. According to Colleen Price, SWAN Coordinator, "the name, time of year, venue, and focus are all changing. This is an opportunity to approach personal and community health in a fresh and exciting way." Promotion of the event states that the focus will be on active participation, hands-on education and fun activities, rather than booths and the distribution of pamphlets.

At this event, SWAN will launch a Know Your Numbers campaign. Know Your Numbers refers to knowing one's basic health indicators, such as cholesterol, blood pressure, body mass index (BMI), and blood sugar. This will help gather statistics about the health of the community and enable the group to establish a baseline of health providing a framework to start building programs around. According to SWAN member, Mo Radotich, "baseline health numbers will help us identify what we're doing well versus what we need to work on."

The Know Your Numbers program consists of complimentary biometric screening and a health risk assessment, as well as a reputable, secure internet portal designed to store, track and evaluate personal baseline health numbers. Online resources and tools are catered to each person's health status and needs. "it's a very simple, standardized and objective way to measure health," said SWAN member, Jenny Heckathorn. "Know Your Numbers is a powerful tool for improving health."

This fall, SWAN will also roll out the 5 Wishes Program. 5 Wishes is the first living will that talks about your personal, emotional and spiritual needs as well as your medical wishes. This program helps you control the way you will be treated if you get seriously ill. It was written with the help of the American Bar Association's Commission on Law and Aging and the nation's leading experts in end-of-life care.

In addition, SWAN is co-sponsoring and supporting a new Parks and Recreation program called Hike Alaska's Wild Kountry (HAWK). This program encourages people to get out and hike Valdez trails. Persons can explore all eight trails, discover hidden treasures, and be entered into a drawing for prizes at the end of the summer.

SWAN is also looking at opportunities to offer winter equipment such as snowshoes and/or skis for community members to use free of charge and even contemplating a winter expo in 2012 to capitalize on the snow Valdez receives each year.

All SWAN activities are available for anyone that would like to participate. Members encourage the community to watch for information via flyers, articles, and to check out the calendar on the soon to be launched webpage, [www.swanalaska.org](http://www.swanalaska.org). Information regarding SWAN and their programs will be distributed at the Copper River Health



SWAN representatives walk in the Valdez 4th of July Parade. Photos courtesy of SWAN

and Safety Fair in August as well as the Kenny Lake Fair this summer.

For more information regarding SWAN, the Healthy Living Expo and Know Your Numbers Program, please contact Colleen Price, SWAN Coordinator, at 834-1807. ■

## CVEA Focuses on Health and Fitness

A healthy workforce creates a happier, more productive team so CVEA encourages health and fitness within the organization. CVEA has a Wellness Program that is in place throughout the year. Employees are encouraged to submit their wellness goals each month, track their progress, and if they reach their monthly goals, they receive an incentive reward.

At the end of six months, if they've continuously reached their goals, they are given an incentive card to Sports Authority where they can purchase items that will further benefit their personal fitness program. A wellness newsletter is also distributed each month with great information on health issues, fitness ideas and nutrition.

Each summer, CVEA offers employees a fitness challenge. In 2009, CVEA challenged CVT to a Biggest Loser Competition. This year, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, CVEA kicked off an employee 'Beat Feet' Challenge. It is basically a 12 week step count challenge encouraging employees to get moving. Sixteen employees are participating and the one taking the most steps will be awarded the 'Big Foot' title and given a new pair of athletic shoes of their choice. There will also be team prizes.

According to Toni Daniels, CVEA's Wellness Program coordinator, "It is exciting to see the camaraderie that builds during the challenges. Both the Biggest Loser and Beat Feet challenges have gotten more people involved in fitness and more people participating in the CVEA Wellness Program."