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## Altona

### Women's Health Matters!

Over 300 women of all ages gathered in Altona last year for a women's conference that covered a wide assortment of health issues. The "Women's Health Matters!" conference was planned by a committee of 20 women with various backgrounds, including health, education, and recreation. Dorothy Braun, chairperson of the CDPI committee in Altona, says the community response to the conference was outstanding. "When we put the word out, people came forward," Braun said. "A group of women who would never cross paths or come together on a regular basis got together to plan this conference – lots of busy women taking on something more."

The conference committee worked with the school division to promote the event to young people, as well as advertising throughout the community. Women of all

ages attended the conference, ranging from high school students to senior citizens. Conference planners also partnered with the Central Regional Health Authority, which runs regional conferences every year and also sponsored the Women's Health Matters conference.

The conference featured 10 workshops and a distinguished line-up of presenters. Keynote speaker Dr. Anne Loewen spoke on "10 Things you can do to Save Your Life," and professional motivational speaker and consultant Deri Latimer dealt with "Building Personal Resilience." A similar topic was addressed by Karen Doell, a former Olympic athlete who has been diagnosed with Parkinson's. She inspired listeners with a speech on "Hanging in There in Spite of Barriers."

"We chose the topic of women's health because we know from the research that if you address women's health that will be taken in and impact the whole family," said Braun. A number of conference workshops focused on family matters, with subjects like "Lost in Translation: Keys to Understanding Parent/Teen Communication" and "Quick Meals for Healthy Teens and Busy Parents."

Other workshop subjects included nutrition, arthritis, depression, osteoporosis, and bladder control, which was humorously titled "I Laughed so Hard I Peed my Pants! A Woman's Guide for Improved Bladder Control."

In addition to networking and gaining new perspectives and ideas, women were

given the opportunity to connect with regional and provincial resources at the conference. “Feedback was very positive,” Braun reported, “and requests for more information and suggestions for a range of future topics was very broad.”

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*Take Note*

**Health Difficulties Facing Senior Women**

- Although women live on average six years longer than men, their later years are characterized by disability and illness.
- Women are more prone to suffering from Alzheimer’s, osteoporosis, chronic diseases, falls, vision problems and spend more days in hospital than men. They are also, on average, poorer than men and more vulnerable to inadequate nutrition and to difficulty in accessing uninsured health care such as medications.
- Older women are more likely to live alone, with inadequate social and material supports in their aging years.
- Senior women are prescribed mood-altering drugs (i.e., minor tranquilizers and sedatives) more than any other population group in Canada.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/pubs/women-femmes/seniors-aines-eng.php>

[http://www.pembinavalleyonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_extcalendar&Itemid=187&extmode=view&extid=602](http://www.pembinavalleyonline.com/index.php?option=com_extcalendar&Itemid=187&extmode=view&extid=602)

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### Reaching Out with Family Cooking

CDPI challenges communities to consider the most at-risk people in their midst and find meaningful solutions for these people, and that's exactly what the RHA Central's Healthy Living Together program in Altona has done.

As part of its CDPI planning, Altona developed a Community Kitchen program to promote nutritional food choices and allow women to network.

But when organizers noticed that a certain group was opting out, they took the spirit of finding solutions to heart by running special cooking classes for a local family. "Some aboriginal women showed interest in Community Kitchen but didn't continue coming, so we got to know a First Nations grandmother, and offered to run one for her family," said Dorothy Braun, chairperson of Altona's CDPI committee. "What we discovered was that in this family grouping there was lots of interest, but they were not comfortable

*"It's really encouraging to see communities find solutions that benefit the areas of their population that, in the past, have not always been a priority."*

*- Jennifer Baker*

in the culturally mixed group setting, and some of them were very shy about their cooking skills."

They met with the family and found out the women were interested in cooking large casseroles, and wanted to be able to use items from the food bank. Some of the women had large combined families with lots of mouths to feed. One of the Community Kitchen partners used to run the food bank and had the standard grocery list which families are provided with every week, so organizers worked from that and created menus to promote healthy eating. A family resource coordinator facilitated the cooking and arranged child care for the family during the series of cooking sessions. These were held at times that suited the family, with one sequence of five sessions in two weeks and another of three sessions in two weeks.

Feedback from the family has been very positive, and younger family members – including two high school boys and two 12-year-old girls – have also joined in to learn how to cook. One of the women said what they really liked at the community kitchen was that they could all sit down to a meal together. "They like the fact that it's family – Grandma, her daughters, their children, and anyone else that wants to come," Braun said. "It has really strengthened bonds with this group in the community through connections to the resource coordinator and the other volunteers and allowed them to feel comfortable, given them a place to go, and allowed the community to get to know them better."

Generous community partners have helped Altona's Community Kitchen program achieve substantial successes. The Rhineland Food Bank has provided resources for cooking and the Altona United Church has offered the use of their facilities for all Community Kitchen events at no cost.

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Take Note

**One of the best things we can do is to eat a variety of nutritious foods by following the recommendations from the Canada Food Guide:**

- Start your day the right way – eat breakfast!
- Eat three meals a day and snack only if you are hungry.
- Keep your bones strong. Choose calcium-rich skim or 1 per cent milk, skim milk cheese and low-fat yogurt.
- Keep your muscles strong. Enjoy meat and alternatives such as lean beef, skinless poultry, eggs, fish or soy foods, in moderation.
- Take time to eat your meals. It takes about 20 minutes for you to feel full after eating.

[http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/healthylivingguide/healthy\\_living\\_guide.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/healthylivingguide/healthy_living_guide.pdf)

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### Family Gym Nights Keep the Whole Family Active

Family Gym Night in Altona is heading into its third year and has been operating at nearly maximum attendance. Something's going right!

The concept behind the Family Gym Nights is to reach out to parents with pre-school children in an effort to promote health awareness, physical activity, and fight obesity in children. Ideally, children and their parents will pick up some healthy habits before any bad ones set in. "There is an educational component – to some extent the horse is out of the barn by the time they're school age," said Dorothy Braun, a community volunteer and chairperson of Altona's CDPI committee. Nutrition information is also integrated into the activities.

*Every child receives a small prize, and those with the most daily activity tickets stand the best chance of winning a grand prize in the draw.*

advertising campaign got the word out and started people talking. "We sent out notices through the schools, made information available at family resource centres, and put up posters all around town," she recalled. "In Gretna we put flyers in every mailbox."

The events were held once a month at first, but soon developed into a twice-monthly activity. Participants are also encouraged to stay active in the time between gym nights, and organizers came up with a unique way to motivate younger participants. "We challenged them to be active for 30 minutes a day and gave out tickets to enter into a draw for every so many minutes they were active in between," Braun said. At year's end, every child receives a small prize, and those with the most daily activity tickets stand the best chance of winning a grand prize in the draw.

Initially, a facilitator was hired to develop activities for three to five year-olds and their parents, but age limits are being extended in Rosenfeld because of its smaller population.

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Attendance has also been strong at Family Gym Nights in nearby Greta and Rosenfeld, which are held in local school gymnasiums. Braun said an effective

Take Note

**Healthy eating helps prevent problems such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, dental cavities and osteoporosis.**

- For Canadian 12 to 17 year olds, the overweight rate has more than doubled, and the obesity rate has tripled in the last 25 years.
- Obese children have damaged arteries comparable to those of a 45-year-old adult who had been smoking for more than 10 years.
- About 40 per cent of adult bone is built during the two years before and after puberty.
- Overall, 26 per cent of Canadian children ages 2 to 17 years are overweight or obese.

<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050706/d050706a.htm>