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Study Shows Benefits of New Community-Based Approach to Combating Obesity

*Tapping Social Support Leads to Lasting Weight Loss,
Fewer Health Risks and Improved Well-Being*

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (July 8, 2010) – Tackling weight loss, risk of chronic disease and overall well being as part of a like-minded social community can dramatically influence an individual’s success rate, according to a new study published in the July 2010 issue of the Center for Disease Control’s *Preventing Chronic Disease* journal (cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2010/jul/09_0033.htm).

The study, conducted at a church in North Carolina, monitored 41 overweight or obese adults as they took part in an eight-week health and wellness program that linked a specific approach to diet and exercise, spirituality and the support of a nurturing community. Participants overall showed improved health, marked weight loss, enhanced emotional well-being, and reduced stress.

Significantly, the percentage of participants in the study with metabolic syndrome – a combination of risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing heart disease and diabetes – was reduced from 44 to 24. And with the support of their community, participants stuck with the program at remarkable levels – over 90% completed the program and nearly three-fourths maintained or continued to lose weight in a 10-week follow up.

“Both the reduction in the rate of metabolic syndrome and the sustainability of the program among participants were really remarkable,” said Floyd “Ski” Chilton, PhD, a professor of physiology at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and one of the co-authors of the *Preventing Chronic Disease* paper. “Studies show that even today’s best commercial weight loss programs experience dropout rates as high as 70% in the first 12 weeks. Having a 90% percent completion rate points to the critical role the community context plays in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.”

The eating and fitness program featured in the study is based on the Gene Smart anti inflammatory diet & exercise principles outlined by Chilton in his book, *The Gene Smart Diet* (Rodale, 2009). Adding the power of social communities to promote and reinforce healthy behaviors to the Gene Smart approach has resulted in the Living Abundantly Program (LivingAbundantlyProgram.com), a personalized whole health program introduced earlier this year by Gene Smart Wellness.

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“Community-based wellness represents a proven, sustainable and scalable solution for integrating prevention into the fabric of America and addressing our nation’s rising rates of obesity and chronic inflammatory diseases,” said Keith Wakeman, CEO of Gene Smart Wellness. “There are an estimated 335,000 churches in America and countless community centers, social groups, retirement communities and other organizations where people unite around common interests. Imagine the possibilities as individuals in these communities are empowered with new tools to work together to live healthier more balanced and fulfilling lives.”

The Living Abundantly Program makes the intrinsic connection between a healthy body, mind, spirit and community, all in the context of a supportive environment that empowers individuals to incorporate healthy behaviors into their everyday lives. Each Living Abundantly Program is hosted by a church or community organization and led by a Certified Gene Smart Health Coach.

“Often, willpower is not enough when trying to change your diet or start a new exercise regimen,” added Chilton. “This study clearly demonstrates that the right program together with the personalized support of a tight-knit community group, such as a church, can help people achieve results more quickly – and make healthy changes that last.”

About Gene Smart

Gene Smart Wellness is a preventative healthcare company dedicated to pioneering real world approaches that empower individuals to take control of their whole health in order to live abundantly. The company’s innovations include its Living Abundantly Community Wellness Program, the Gene Smart Omega-3 Index Home Blood Test and the Gene Smart Anti-Inflammation Diet & Exercise Program. More information on Gene Smart is available at www.GeneSmart.com.

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Dr. Chilton is a professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Chief Scientific Advisor to Gene Smart Wellness, the company offering the Living Abundantly Program. His conflict of interest has been disclosed to Wake Forest University Health Sciences and outside sponsors, and is institutionally managed.