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Study Shows Benefits of New Church-Based Wellness Program
Emphasis on Whole Health and Christian Community Support
Leads to Fewer Health Risks, Significant Weight Loss and Improved Well-Being

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (August 3, 2010) – Our nation’s crisis of rising obesity rates, inflammatory diseases, and struggles with spirituality and emotional well-being are represented in the pews of churches across America each Sunday. Now a 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), suggests that tackling weight loss and health issues as part of a caring Christian community can dramatically influence an individual’s success rate.

The study, conducted at a church in North Carolina, monitored 41 overweight or obese adults as they took part in a guided community health and wellness program. Participants in the study showed improved health, marked weight loss, enhanced emotional well-being, and reduced stress. Significantly, the percentage of overweight/obese 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 Christian community, participants stuck with the program at remarkable levels – over 90 percent 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 compliance with the program among participants were really remarkable,” said Floyd “Ski” Chilton, PhD, a professor of physiology at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and senior author of the *Preventing Chronic Disease* paper. “Studies show that even today’s best commercial weight loss programs experience dropout rates as high as 70 percent in the first 12 weeks. Having a 90 percent completion rate points to the critical role a Christian community can play in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.”

Modeled on the program in the study, the Living Abundantly Christian Wellness Program was recently introduced by Gene Smart Wellness (www.GeneSmart.com), a leading preventative healthcare company, and is now available to other churches looking to empower the whole health of their congregations and communities. Several churches throughout the Southeastern United States have already hosted Living Abundantly Programs for their members with great success.

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The Living Abundantly Christian Wellness Program uniquely makes the connection between a healthy body, mind, spirit and community, all in the context of a supportive Christian environment that empowers individuals to incorporate proven, healthy diet and exercise behaviors into their everyday lives. The program's ecumenical spiritual and self-discovery practices were co-developed with CareNet, Inc., a leading faith-based counseling organization and a subsidiary of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, and the program's approach to eating and fitness are based the Gene Smart anti-inflammatory diet and exercise principles outlined by Chilton in his book, *The Gene Smart Diet* (Rodale, 2009).

Steve Scoggin, Psy.D, LPC, president of CareNet, described the program and its balanced approach to wellness as an opportunity for churches to encourage the vitality of their congregations and communities by advocating whole health – including physical wellness.

Each seven-week Living Abundantly Christian Wellness Program is hosted by a church and led by a Gene Smart Certified Whole Health Coach. Additionally, the company is adding weekend Living Abundantly retreats, as well as a program designed specifically to address the often-overlooked issue of clergy health and wellness. In fact, a recent study of clergy health in North Carolina found that pastors experienced much higher rates of obesity and chronic diseases than the general population.

“Churches are a reflection of the health crisis we are facing across America – with alarming rates of obesity, chronic inflammatory diseases and an overall lack of balance,” said Keith Wakeman, CEO of Gene Smart Wellness. “We believe the faith community can and must be an important part of the solution. There are an estimated 335,000 churches in America, where people unite around a common faith. Imagine the possibilities as these churches are empowered with new tools to reinforce and expand their ministry to help their members live healthier, more balanced and more fulfilling lives.”

For more information or to learn how your church can host a Living Abundantly Program, visit www.LivingAbundantlyProgram.com.

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 Program, the Gene Smart Omega-3 Index Home Blood Test and the Gene Smart Anti-Inflammatory Diet & Exercise Program. More information on Gene Smart is available at www.GeneSmart.com.

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Floyd “Ski” Chilton, PhD, 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.