

APFRI educates, collaborates with local partners

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May 14, 2009 – The Army Physical Fitness Research Institute opened its doors today during a symposium designed to provide an educational opportunity for its staff and also establish a stronger relationship with the health, fitness and sports medicine professionals in the region.

The day-long Jim Thorpe Leadership and Health Symposium in Root Hall's Wil Waschoe Auditorium included representatives from the Carlisle Area School District, Dunham Clinic, and APFRI annexes at the Sgt. Maj. Academy at Ft. Bliss, Texas and the Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

Briefers during the symposium included Dr. Jerel Zoltick, who spoke about the risk factors and prevention of cardiovascular disease, Col. Tom Williams, APFRI director, who addressed leadership, health and fitness and Maj. Donald Goss, who focused on injury prevention for the active lifestyle.

"Even though we deal with publics that may be different in age, many of the same lessons apply," said Goss.

The symposium turned into a discussion among the attendees who shared their unique insights into issues like modeling and maintaining health, how to integrate health programs and areas of key research to focus on.

Symposium useful for APFRI annexes

Recently the APFRI program has been exported to two annexes. The collaboration brings 24 years of APFRI expertise to senior NCOs and the 1,200 mid-grade officers attending the Sgt. Maj. Academy and General Staff College respectively, as well as the staff and faculty of each. APFRI has also opened its services to the family members of Soldiers in order to increase awareness and to allow families as a whole to implement healthy lifestyle changes.

"We have exported the entire program, with only modifications for the age groups of the communities being assessed," said Col. Tom Williams, APFRI director.

The conference provided a learning opportunity for the APFRI staff at its other facilities, according to Lt. Col. Sonya Edmonds. Personnel from the annexes attended and the symposium was broadcast live from the APFRI website for the staffs to watch from Fort Bliss and Fort Leavenworth.

Education

The symposium was another outlet to help change behavior through education, one of the goals of the institute, according to Williams.

As part of the APFRI program, leaders undergo a complete health assessment. The assessments help to give the APFRI staff a baseline for each students' health, fitness, nutrition and well-being. From that information the staff is able to identify each individual's strengths and identify fitness and nutrition and behavioral changes that may be necessary. Then the APFRI staff provides information and guidance through classes and other educational opportunities.

"Almost everyone realizes that exercise and living a healthy lifestyle are important, but we seldom give ourselves time to do so," said Williams. "We try and help that by giving you the knowledge of what your risk factors are and by providing opportunities to learn how to deal with them."

The education aspect is one of the most important, according to Williams.

"The underpinning of the program is to push you into lessening your risk factors," he said. "The best way to do that is to educate you on what they are and what you can do to mitigate them. The benefit of the program is that it gives you an idea of your health relative to that of others in your age group."

Plans are already underway for next year's symposium, which may be held just prior to Jim Thorpe Sports Days. Edmonds said that time period would allow the athletic trainers from the visiting war colleges and other regional collegiate staffs to possibly attend.