

HEALTH

President calls for end to racial disparities in disease rates

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Democratic National Committee Chairs Governor Roy Romer and Steve Grossman recently applauded a new initiative announced by President Clinton and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala that seeks to eliminate racial disparities in disease rates.

Surgeon General David Satcher will lead the initiative, which will allocate \$30 million annually to 30 communities to focus on one or two health problems and develop model strategies to combat them.

President Clinton was joined in the Oval Office by Satcher, Shalala, and representatives of the NAACP and other minority organizations

"Health is but one example of where we must work to eliminate racial disparity"
Roy Romer

in announcing the program in his radio address.

"As the most prosperous nation in the world, it is simply wrong for there to exist racial disparities in health," said Romer, the DNC's general chairman. "President Clinton's initiative will put an end to the practice of treating communities different ways and will set universal, national health goals that apply to all Americans."

Romer continued, "Health is but one example of where we must work to eliminate racial disparity. From the economy and unemployment

to education and housing, President Clinton and the Democratic Party are working to close all those gaps and ensure that the American dream is available for every citizen of this country."

Grossman, the DNC National Chairman, said, "The significance of the President's plan is that it recognizes that when one American is left behind, we are all left behind. That is the core philosophy of the Democratic Party, and is the driving force behind the bold, innovative program President Clinton has announced."

The President's initiative will focus on six targeted areas: infant mortality, cancer screening,

cardiovascular disease, diabetes, child and adult immunizations, and HIV/AIDS. In these six areas, African-Americans are affected at significantly higher levels than whites.

- African-American children die in infancy at a rate 2.5 times higher than whites;
- African-American men under 65 are diagnosed with prostate cancer at nearly twice the rate of white men;
- African-American men suffer heart disease at twice the rate of whites;
- African-Americans are afflicted with diabetes at a rate 70 percent higher than whites;
- Just 20 percent of African-American adults get the vaccine for pneumonia, compared with 35 percent of whites.

Exercise extremely important for overweight children

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Q: How important is exercise for overweight children?

A: In most cases, obesity is not solely defined by the amount of calories you consume or the types of food you eat, but by inactivity. When children sit in front of the computer or TV they tend to eat more and gain weight.

Parents should encourage children to get out of the house and exercise.

They should be encouraged to walk to and

from school, if it is safe, and engage in sports like basketball, volleyball, swimming and biking.

If possible, have indoor exercise equipment in the house. Little children should be encouraged to play during recess. Parents should also seek out churches or other organizations that offer activities for children.

Parents can help overweight children get in shape by eating right and exercising themselves.

Q: I plan to breast-feed my child when I

return to work. Is there anything I should know before heading back to the office?

A: It would help you if you took it easy in the beginning until your body gets used to being back to work.

If your employer will permit, see if you can start out taking a day off each week. If your employer is not flexible, you can begin to get your body ready a couple of weeks before returning to work by trying to get on the same feeding schedule the baby will be on when you

return. This usually means breast feeding in the morning and evening, and pumping or nursing only at break times during the day.

It is also important to make sure your infant can take milk from a bottle before leaving them with a baby-sitter. It is best to introduce a bottle about three weeks after birth. Also, check with your employer to see if you will be given a couple of breaks during the day to pump your milk.

(See Health, Page 16)

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