

Who's "Bashing" Philly Now?

by Jami Tryer

Okay, we used to be one of the fattest cities in the nation, but now who's the biggest loser?

Men's Fitness Magazine is at it again – putting our country's cities on the 'ole scale. This time the America's Fittest Cities 2006 (their eighth annual roundup of the fittest and fattest metropolises) places Philadelphia as number 23. This is a great improvement from past reportings considering our area has more pizza places per capita than almost anywhere!

Thanks to Mayor Street's Health Journey Program which grants discounted access to more than 100 citywide activities, health clubs and gyms, our city improved 21 spots in our the survey this year. The Mayor's Family Fitness Challenge mentored 100 overweight families toward a healthier lifestyle last year. Street even capitalized on a three-week mass-transit strike by adding walking routes and bike trails.

An avid fitness enthusiast, Mayor Street jogs 15 to 20 miles and bicycles between 30 to 40 miles each week. In his role as the Philadelphia's chief executive, Mayor Street has pledged to take a leading role in helping to "shape up" Philadelphia's standing as a physically fit city. He made it his mission to infuse the city with his enthusiasm and passion for a fitter Philly.

Back in January of 2000, when Men's Fitness Magazine issued a report announcing America's Fattest Cities. Newly elected Mayor John

Street was setting up the "Office of Health and Fitness." Pat Croce (at that time, the President and an owner of the 76ers) conceived the idea of the city losing 76 TONS of fat in 76 days. Thousands of Philadelphians joined in this initiative, and approximately 26,000 people averaged a lost of 5.3 pounds each.

Since then, many citizens, the Department of Public Health, private, corporate and community organizations, institutions of higher learning, public and private schools, communities of faith, hospitals, health systems, health clubs and gyms, pharmaceuticals, media outlets, local, state and federal government agencies, non-profit health agencies and sports teams have worked to develop a coalition that brings to life one of my favorite expressions, "all of us are smarter, stronger and richer than one of us!" We can now add. . .healthier! And the launch of Philly Fit Magazine has added to the frenzy. The PhillyFit Special Events (known as Bashes) have really gained in popularity.

Meredith Landis, President of Pulse PR, Inc. feels that the buzz is apparent not only in the city but the burbs too. "I think the PhillyFit Bashes are a wonderful idea because so many people want to try new ways to get in shape, but don't know where to start. This venue makes it easy for them to test new things and decide what works best for them in a non-intimidating, low-risk way."

Just how effective are the PhillyFit Bashes? "These special events are definitely paving the way to a fitter Philly," says Emilio Roman, Founder and CEO of www.anewbody4U.com. Emilio works closely with Gwen Foster supporting and implementing her efforts for all programs citywide, "The bashes really bring fitness professionals (and those seeking their services) together in a fun-filled way. Jami has really married the best practices of everyone by publishing this magazine and hosting these unique and exciting events."

Mayor Street's vision to see Philadelphia become one of the HEALTHIEST cities in the nation is fast becoming a reality. Maybe he'll even come to the next PhillyFit Bash!

He has tapped Ms. Gwen Foster, MPH, CHES as Health and Fitness Czar. She personally encourages all Philadelphians to join a most exciting effective support group in our City's journey to health. If you have specific ideas or questions about any of the programs the city has to offer contact the Mayor's Office of Health and Fitness Municipal Services Building,



Wanna get Philly to be the fittest city in the nation? These tips provided by the Mayor's HEALTH JOURNEY 2006 program are bound to help us all succeed!

1. Select a Buddy!

Be sure your Health Buddy is someone who will encourage you all the way. You should be in contact with your Health Buddy daily!

2. Drink More Water

GRADUALLY increase water intake to 1/2 your body weight in ounces. (For example, a 150lb. person would gradually increase water intake to 75oz. or 9.4 glasses daily) Disclaimer: Please check with your physician if you have been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, kidney disease, edema, or any condition that restricts fluid intake.

3. Increase Physical Activity

Gradually increase aerobic activity to at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week (for example, walking, biking and swimming). Be sure to include a five-minute warm-up and cool down.

4. Enjoy More Fruits & Vegetables

Eat 2-4 whole fruits* and 3-5 (1/2 cup) servings of veggies daily. Choose a variety of colors! (*Diabetics: check with physician for safe number of servings)

5. Eat Foods High in Fiber & Vegetable Protein

Eat more whole grain breads, cereals and pastas along with beans, nuts, seeds and soy products.

6. Take Time to Breathe Deeply

Inhale through nostrils to the count of 4, hold for 16 and exhale for 8. Repeat 10 times. (Do three times daily).

7. Schedule Time for Rest & Play

Having fun is an important part of healthy living. Schedule time for adequate rest and the hobbies you enjoy.

8. Adjust Your Eating Schedule

Eat like a King for breakfast, a Queen for lunch and a Pauper for supper. Space meals 5 hours apart, drink water in between.

9. Get Adequate Amounts of Sunlight

Using the proper safety precautions, get 10 to 15 minutes, 2 to 3 times weekly. (This builds Vitamin D & can help to lower blood pressure)

10. Give Someone a Reason to Smile

Develop meaningful relationships with friends and family. Do something nice for someone daily.

Philadelphia

23rd Fattest

The Least Athletic City

One of 3 MF "Fittest Mayors in America" Award Winners

Slowly but surely, Philadelphia is pulling itself off the Fattest list. Progress could be faster if people played more sports. Last year, we named San Antonio as the town where sports go to die. This year, Philly scrapes the bottom in the sports-participation category. It's not as if there aren't opportunities. Aside from Honolulu, Philly has more basketball courts per capita than any other city in our report. But residents are only slightly more likely than average to actually shoot hoops. And in a study of more than 100 sports activities, the City of Brotherly Love came in dead last. While it might make sense that Philly residents come in near the bottom of the list for, say, water-skiing (and they do), that shouldn't be the case for jogging and calisthenics-both activities in which Philly ranked second to last.

Maybe more Philadelphians should live by Mayor John F. Street's example. Thanks in part to his Health Journey program, which grants discounted access to more than 100 citywide activities, health clubs, and gyms, Philly improved 21 spots in our survey this year. The Mayor's Family Fitness Challenge mentored 100 overweight families toward a healthier lifestyle last year. He even capitalized on a three week mass-transit strike by adding walking routes and bike racks. And, despite it all, he still finds time to exercise for two hours each day.

BRAGGING RIGHTS AND SOBERING FACTS:

- Philly has the second-highest number of basketball courts per capita of anywhere in our survey. (Honolulu has the most.)
- Fast food is relatively rare. Relative to population, Philly's number of fast-food joints is in the bottom third of our ranking.
- TV watching is lower than average.
- The CDC reports that 77.3 percent of residents risk health problems because they don't get enough exercise. Twenty-two percent of adults haven't engaged in even moderate physical for 30 days or more activity (we're talking vacuuming or gardening here).
- Almost 22 percent are clinically obese.
- Alcohol consumption is higher than average.
- There are more pizza places per capita here than almost anywhere.
- Philly has the lowest number of city parks per capita in our survey.
- It also has the lowest sports-participation rate of any city in our survey.

REPORT CARD: Philadelphia

Healthy Habits

Fitness Centers/Sporting Goods Stores	D-
Nutrition	C
Exercise/Sports Participation	F

Risk Factors

Alcohol	B
TV Watching	B+
Overweight/Sedentary	B
Junk Food	D

Environment

Air	C
Climate	C+
Geography	C

Urban Attributes

Commute	C
Parks/Open Space	F
Recreation Facilities	B+
Health Care	B+



Jami Tryer is a freelance writer, who grew up in Margate, N.J., but has been a Center City Philly resident since 1991. She is a partner with Munroe Creative Partners, a well-known graphic design firm, where she is a Senior Project Manager and helps to develop new business. She has been freelancing in her spare time for five years for magazines such as Philadelphia Style where she has reported on trends in beauty, fashion, food and culture. For PhillyFIT, Jami has countered the myth that dining out can be frighteningly fattening in her column. Contact JamiTryer@phillyfitmagazine.com.