

[Chatting and Laughing]

McKeever: If you sit in the beauty shop long enough, you can get the pulse of what's going on in the community.

People are coming in and sharing information on a regular basis.

Woman1: Well, I promised my doctor that I was going to try to lose some weight so I wouldn't have to have surgery on this knee.

McKeever: I started thinking, what if we were passing pertinent information through the beauty shop?

Woman2: Oh, and, you know, the grand opening for the farmers' market today.

McKeever: Using this as a vehicle to save lives.

Woman3: I'm working on losing weight, but I know that, if I can continue to exercise and watch what I eat, that my main motive right now is to feel good.

Capt Walter Williams: Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. On average, African Americans are twice as likely to die from cardiovascular disease as whites. The idea of REACH is to learn specific community-driven strategies that are effective in reducing and eliminating health disparities.

McKeever: So we ran an ad in the paper that simply said if you had a million dollars, what would you do to reduce cardiovascular disease among blacks in Oregon? And the ideas poured out the woodwork.

Woman1: I love water aerobics.

Marsha Jordan: Come to shallow class. I have a lot of people who don't swim in my class. And I could sign you up right now. You know, that part of the free exercise program.

McKeever: Marsha Jordan, who is a hairstylist, had wanted to be a physical activity instructor for years, but couldn't afford the training, and we paid for her to become a certified water aerobics instructor.

Marsha Jordan: Start jogging in place. Right here. Punch it out. You guys can move up, closer to me --I'm not going to hurt you. And right cross, left cross. I have people that are coming on walkers, canes, and when they get in the water, they are totally liberated.

McKeever: We're not out making superathletes out of these people, nor are we athletes ourselves, but we're making small, incremental changes that are making a major impact.

Capt Walter Williams: It's very important, right out of the womb, to start healthy lifestyles. CDC has had aggressive programs that help youth learn the things they need to know about prevention.

Daughter: Heart attack, high blood pressure, high cholesterol --these are silent killers. Since I've been in this program, I've been sharing this information with my family, especially my mom --she's been going to kickboxing classes and our whole diet has been changing. My mom has started cooking dinner with more vegetables. Snow peas.

McKeever: Because everyone's not going to become vegan and eat tofu. They need to learn how to cook the foods that they are culturally connected to in a healthy way.

Mom: I've lost quite a bit of weight, and I'm trying to eat a lot better than I've been doing before, because of her helping me out with what she's learned.

McKeever: They know these people, so when they say something to them, they believe them.

Woman3: It's good to see people just...more radiant because they're feeling good. And it's not what other people are thinking about them, it's what they're thinking about themselves.

Capt Walter Williams: Apart from the camaraderie and fun that a lot of the participants in the interventions are having, they're working and people's lives are being improved.

Daughter: I'm seeing my mom lose a lot of weight, and she feels a lot better. I see her smiling more. That feels good to me because, you know, I feel like I've put some help in and that things have changed. Yeah.