



NAAFA Newsletter

Official Publication of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance

**Fall
2006**

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Chapter Meeting, SF Bay Area NAAFA, Saturday, September 10, 2006, e-mail newsletter@naafa.org for information.

PJ Jamz Party, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, September 16, 2006, www.capitalnaafa.org

Social Luncheon & Planning Meeting, Chicago NAAFA, Saturday, September 16, 2006, www.chicagonaafa.org

Pick-a-nick Basket, Capital NAAFA, Sunday, October 1, 2006, www.capitalnaafa.org

Last month saw another great NAAFA Convention, catching up with old and meeting new friends (although I missed seeing some of my NYC friends; where you at?), but even better was the announcement of the New NAAFA. What's the New NAAFA? Read on!

• **New NAAFA Unveiled at 2006 Convention**

NAAFA has a new look, a new logo, a new



informational brochure, new strategic goals, a viable plan to achieve those goals over the next five years, and a new fee structure designed to make NAAFA membership easily accessible to people of all income levels. Our goal is to accomplish our initiatives, becoming a world-class human rights organization building on our already established reputation as a credible and effective advocate for people of size.

At our national convention just held in Boston, we introduced our five year plan, which includes the following six strategic initiatives: (1) to streamline our organization to make it more nimble, more effective, and more responsive; (2) to increase our membership by instituting a \$15-a-year membership fee; (3) to pursue universal healthcare; (4) to promote our new legal aid program - FLARE, the Fat Legal Advocacy, Rights, and Education Project; (5) to promote civil rights compliance and enhanced legislation ensuring the rights of people of size; and (6) to establish a national grassroots action team for child advocacy.

NAAFA is delighted to help start the country's first legal advocacy project focused solely on issues of body size. Our new legal aid program called FLARE, the Fat Legal Advocacy, Rights, and Education Project, has been created to assist people facing size-related discrimination. This program will help aid those attorneys already volunteering their time, train more lawyers in weight-related issues, promote legislation prohibiting weight-based discrimination, and maintain a national legal database of attorneys willing to take on weight-related cases.

We've begun The Size Savvy Project, a grassroots effort to build a nationwide database that identifies how well

BBW Pampering Day,
Chicago NAAFA, Saturday,
October 14, 2006,
www.chicagonaafa.org

8th Annual Masquerade
Ball, Capital NAAFA,
Saturday, October 28,
2006,
www.capitalnaafa.org

:: newsletter@naafa.org
:: <http://naafa.org>

:: 916-558-6880

various businesses accommodate people of size. We will gather data on all kinds of businesses in communities across the country: healthcare services, airlines, automakers, restaurants, hair salons, health clubs, theaters, you name it. Each participating locale will have its own database, accessible through the new NAAFA website being introduced in September 2006. For each business listed we will provide not only the initial data but also user ratings and comments that will help keep the information relevant and up-to-date. This is unprecedented. NAAFA will be the first human rights organization to develop a database focused specifically on the needs of more than 30% of the American population.

On the web: <http://www.naafa.org>

• **All Sizes: The 2006 NAAFA Convention in Review**

*by Peggy Howell,
NAAFA Board of
Directors Member and
Public Relations Chair*

NAAFA, the grand dame of the size acceptance movement, held its annual convention in Needham, Massachusetts (near Boston) August 9 to 13, 2006. The article above tells all about the New NAAFA and our plans for the next five years, but please don't entertain the misconception that because NAAFAs are advocates and activists that we don't know how to party. That could not be further from the truth! The national convention lasts five days and includes swim parties, luncheons, dinners, dances, a nightly hospitality suite and still has time to squeeze in educational workshops and interesting addresses from highly qualified people in the size acceptance movement. If you were among the early birds, you also had the opportunity to enjoy the "probably world famous" Duck Tour of Boston and the Charles River.



My sister Darliene and I flew out of Vegas Monday night around midnight, arrived in Boston just before 8:00 AM, and were off to meet the Ducks by 10:00. We had such a blast that we were wide awake the entire day, believe it or not! Our tour couldn't have been more enjoyable. Our bus driver was very friendly and informative. Then we got on the pink (actually salmon) duck and had the time of our lives with PJ, one of the cutest, fast-talking tour guides you could ever hope to meet. Who wouldn't love a girl who comes to work in her pajamas and slippers? Next time you are in Boston, be sure to take this fun and informative tour.

Dar and I had lunch that day at Dick's Last Resort, and that visit yielded some interesting pictures which you will find among the hundreds Darliene took at this year's convention (a sampling will be posted to <http://naafa.org> soon).

Wednesday was the official registration day and it included workshops such as the introduction of The Size Savvy Project and Health at Every Size. Since I'm a night owl from way back, I enjoyed not only the Mix and Mingle with the fabulous Kristie Agee singing for us and introducing her new CD, but the Late Night Pool Party as well. I'm a hot tub lovin' gal so that's where you found me dangling my feet in the very hot water!

Thursday was a busy day for me starting with a morning press conference followed by a Welcoming Late Breakfast and the NAAFA Annual General Meeting. It was at this meeting that we introduced our five year plan; see the article above and come to <http://naafa.org> for the details, and you'll see why I'm excited to be part of this new NAAFA! Our new motto: We Come In All Sizes... Understand It. Support It. Accept It.

Thursday night was the fabulous Vendor Preview Fashion Show where we saw convention attendees strut their stuff on the runway and were entertained by the wonderful dance team, Big Moves. (Coming soon: See pictures at <http://naafa.org>.) During our karaoke which followed the fashion show, we got to experience some of the incredible talent in our community first hand. I'll tell you what, fat kids can sing! Dar and I browsed through the NAAFA vendor mall doing some late night shopping, catching up with old friends and making new ones, then she was off to bed and I was off to the hot tub again!

I truly wanted to start Friday morning off with my wonderful lil' sis Melinda splashing about in the pool at her Water Aerobics Workshop, truly I did! But, truth be told, I didn't make it! Friday my sister/roommate Darliene and I slept in, but I did get up in time for the fun-filled Not-So-Silent Auction Luncheon. This is one of the highlights of the week, with lots of lively banter and bidding going on for items that have been donated by vendors, board members and other generous supporters of NAAFA. This event raises a lot of money every year to enable NAAFA to grow and support projects that we feel are important to people of size.

The vendor fair officially opens on Friday although some of the clothing vendors had been selling out of their rooms all week in the "NAAFA mall". This year we saw a lot of new faces bringing us exciting new products created especially for people of size. It was great to also see the creators of our longtime favorite clothing bringin' it to us again this year. I love shopping!

After another wonderful selection of workshops came our Freaky Friday Costume Party. It certainly is fun to see how creative our friends can be as we danced into the wee hours of the morning. Then there was the hospitality suite with snacks and drinks and fun and games but quite frankly, I couldn't make it all the way to 3 AM. Sometimes a girl's just gotta get her beauty sleep. Ya know what I'm talkin' about?

I made it up in time for our 8:30 AM Board Meeting (we had one every day) on Saturday morning, but they got me

sans make-up or hair fixed and when we were done, I went back to bed! Once we woke up, Dar hit the mall and I went to the Seat-Of-The-Pants Theater. Mary Ray Worley led us in song, and people who had attended the Poetry Workshop the day before got to share their writings with us. Others read from favorite books or essays. It was a very moving workshop as people expressed their thoughts and feelings about being a fat person. Lucky for me I wear waterproof mascara!

Saturday night's Grand Ball Dinner and Dance was fabulous as it always is! People dressed up in their finest, the room was elegantly decorated, the food was delicious and the company divine! But for me this night is always a little bittersweet because it means the convention is almost over and tonight we'll dance the last dance.

Sunday we attended the Farewell Brunch and Final Words workshop where we recalled the things about the week that were meaningful for each of us. I was very happy to have experienced another great time of fun and bonding with this group of people I have grown to love so much. The best news is, we're going to do it all again in Chicago next year!

[Read on...](#)

- **New Weight Score Based on Faulty Analysis**

*by Linda Bacon, PhD,
Nutrition Researcher and
Professor, NAAFA
member*

At least 400,000 Americans die of overweight and obesity every year, making it soon to surpass smoking as the leading cause of preventable death [1]. At least that's what the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) told us.

But an updated federal report, published last year in the Journal of the American Medical Association (and reported in the Late Spring 2005 NAAFA Newsletter), acknowledged that the previous analysis suffered from computational errors [2]. In fact, obesity and overweight only result in an excess of 26,000 annual deaths, far fewer than guns, alcohol or car crashes. And separating overweight from obesity reveals further interesting information: *"overweight" people live longer than "normal" weight people.*

The data weren't surprising to those of us who study these issues. This is not an anomaly, but consistent with many other investigations. That it came from the CDC and got published in JAMA were the real astonishing facts.



We waited for the backlash. Fear-mongering about weight is worth billions to industry and is consistent with government policy. Few stand to gain from the news that overweight is benign, if not beneficial. The backlash has been slowly building, and recently came out full force in a highly publicized study published in the August issue of the New England Journal of Medicine [3].

The front page leader in my local paper loudly proclaimed: "Just a few extra pounds is bad for you" and the article title reinforced the message: "Study finds risks for the barely overweight." Turn to the original report, and you find a consistent conclusion in the abstract: "excess body weight during midlife, including overweight, is associated with an increased risk of death."

But before you dust off those diet books, let's take a look at the data itself. The authors worked hard for their conclusion. They examined records from over a half million AARP members that had been surveyed over a ten year period. What they found was entirely consistent with the earlier JAMA report: "overweight" people had the lowest mortality risk. But that wouldn't serve their purposes. NEJM's press release wouldn't look nearly as attractive with that headline.

So they subjected their data to numerous manipulations before finally arriving at a suitable conclusion. First they threw out data on people who were smokers or former smokers. Nope, still shows overweight as benign. They hid this with a sleazy method: using only the top (BMIs of 23 to 24.9) of the "normal weight" group compared to the whole of the "overweight" group.

Then they found an even more creative trick. When they asked participants - some of whom were in their 70s - what they had weighed at the age of 50, they hit paydirt: at last, overweight - *at midlife* - was associated with increased risk, albeit modest. This will grab the headlines. No need to highlight that we had to whittle our data down to about 5% of the original sample to get this result! (That 40% of the participants chose to leave the question on recalled weight blank should give some indication of the ability of people to accurately report this information.)

Their paper is weak for many other reasons: they had a very low response rate (18%) from a sample that is not nationally representative; their data is based on self-report, which is known to be inaccurate; adjustments for potential confounders were weakly conducted; the list goes on. And they neglected to note another important conclusion: weight *loss* is associated with a significant increased risk of death for middle-aged "overweight" people.

Come on, New England Journal of Medicine. We expect scholarship, not propaganda.

References

1. Mokdad, A.H., et al., *Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000*. Journal of the American Medical

Association, 2004. 291: p. 1238-45.

2. Flegal, K.M., et al., *Excess deaths associated with underweight, overweight, and obesity*. Journal of the American Medical Association, 2005. 293(15): p. 1861-7.
3. Adams, K., et al., *Overweight, Obesity, and Mortality in a Large Prospective Cohort of Persons 50 to 71 Years Old*. New England Journal of Medicine, 2006. 355(8): p. 763-8.

• **How Fat is "Too Fat"?**

by Marilyn Wann, NAAFA Board of Directors Member and Fat Rights Agitator

Even within the size acceptance community, I sometimes see a tendency to define the fattest of us as "too fat". I don't buy into such a line-drawing project. If someone insists on creating a too-fat category, then I put myself on the fat side of the line. I stand up and say, "I am Fatacus!"



I abhor the bogeyman/precautionary function that the people on the farthest fat end of the bell curve are made to serve, in our prevailing, weight-focused paradigm. How profoundly painful that must be, to be the example of what everyone else should fear becoming. An extreme, not of weight, but of alienation. Especially since such people are presented with no better options than any other fat person has. If someone is "too-fat," what's the recommendation? Diets? Pills? Richard Simmons? Gastric guillotine? Fat camp? I'm no medical expert, either, but I wouldn't advise for the fattest person something I don't advise for anyone else.

What I hope for the fattest of us is what I hope for everybody:

- An enjoyable, relaxed relationship to food so it can serve us on all levels (nutritional, aesthetic, pleasure, social connection, celebration/ritual, etc.);
- An enjoyable, punishment-free relationship to physical activities that suit our bodies and our lives so we can explore that mysterious and lovely mind/body connection thingy;
- An enjoyable relationship to other people, to work, to purpose and meaning in life, to full citizenship and all that good socio-political stuff.

I wouldn't weigh an 80-pound person or an 800- pound person (although someone obviously has), I'd offer the same Health At Every Size (HAES) principles to both people (which is not to say I'm in any position of authority over anyone!). I would care about changes in embodiment and empowerment, not changes in weight.

Here's a corollary that might provoke disagreement: I don't conceive of "good" nutrition and "good" exercise habits as a prerequisite for personhood for either fat or thin people. On my most dreary (and also most unrepentant) days, I borrow a saying from a black friend: "All I *have* to do is stay fat and die." (Saying that often lightens my mood, so I go for a walk!) I don't imagine that "good" nutrition and "good" exercise confer anywhere near 100% control over health or over weight. I don't deem health or weight as being anywhere near as important as a person's basic feeling of worthiness to live.

I may well be comparing incomparables unfairly. But my urge, in response to the "How fat is too fat?" question is to ask, "How human is human enough?"

• **Media and Research Roundup**

Editor's Note: I'm trying to catch up with all the interesting stuff that crosses my desk; here's some from this spring. So, in the words of Stephen Colbert, Open wide, America; here comes a big, fat, wriggling nightcrawler of truth!

2005: Ken Resnicow (School of Public Health, University of Michigan) and others report on the failure of GoGirls, a weight control program for African- American teenage girls; participants on average gained an insignificant amount of weight. A logical conclusion would be to abandon such failures, but, amazingly, the authors advocate more of the same.

Abstract: <http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/13/10/1739>

2005: Department of Human Biology, Maastricht University - After a very low calorie diet, fat women regained 14% more than they lost in the first place in the first 2 years after losing weight. Those who gained back the least had dieted less and had a high resting metabolic rate.

Abstract:

<http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/short/13/12/2162>

February 2006: The International Journal of Epidemiology publishes an article by Health At Every Size (HAES) advocates Paul Campos, Abigail Saguy, Paul Ernsberger (Chair, NAAFA Board of Advisors), Eric Oliver and Glenn Gaesser calling for an end to the moral panic over fatness. Extract: <http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/extract/35/1/55>

March 23, 2006: Researcher Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota advocates chair-free classrooms to promote weight loss in children, based on a study of only one week in duration. Keep on the lookout for a reemergence of child labor.

Article: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&xml=/news/2006/03/26/nclass26.xml>

April 2006: A paper by Ruth Striegel-Moore (Department of Psychology, Wesleyan University) and others finds that body mass index (BMI) and "obesity" are not correlated

with night eating, debunking a common myth.

Abstract: <http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/14/1/139>

April 2006: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition - United Kingdom researchers found that fat children do not have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease than their thinner counterparts.

Abstract: <http://sageke.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/ajcn;83/4/767>

April 2006: Dianne Neumark-Sztainer and others at the University of Minnesota report in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association on their research that indicates that teenagers who diet are more likely to develop eating disorders, and recommend "a shift away from dieting".

Abstract: <http://www.epi.umn.edu/research/eat/publications.shtm>

April 4, 2006: As reported in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, researchers from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles found that coronary patients with *higher* BMI had a *lower* risk of cardiac death.

Abstract: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=16580531&dopt=Abstract

April 10, 2006: The consumer group Public Citizen petitions the Food and Drug Administration (USA) to remove the diet drug orlistat (Xenical) from the market, citing a link with colon cancer.

Petition: <http://www.citizen.org/publications/release.cfm?ID=7423>

April 13, 2006: Fat actress Lindsay Hollister advocates size acceptance in a feature article for the Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch, mentioning her talk at last year's NAAFA Convention. She also hopes for a better selection of acting roles.

Article: <http://www.columbusdispatch.com/features-story.php?story=dispatch/2006/04/13/20060413-F1-01.html>

April 14, 2006: The Newhouse News Service issues an informative article on fat phobia among the medical professions. The article quoted research by NAAFA member Pat Lyons, and reprinted NAAFA's guidelines for physicians treating fat patients.

Article: http://www.newhousenews.com/archive/seeman0414_06.html

April 15, 2006: News website Slate and the Washington Post publish an opinion piece by William Saletan skeptical of the "war on obesity".

Article: <http://www.slate.com/id/2139941>

April 19, 2006: The National Center for Health Statistics (USA) reports preliminary findings that Americans are living longer than ever, and that the gender gap for life expectancy is decreasing. So how bad can the "obesity epidemic" be?

Report: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/prelimdeaths04/preliminarydeaths04.htm>

- **Is Passion Enough?**

by Sandy Schaffer, Fitness Instructor and NAAFA Member

(Note: This article is a transcript of Sandy's speech to a local Toastmasters group in June 2006.)



I'd like to try an experiment with your help. I am going to ask you to hold your breath. And while your are holding your breath, hold one arm up in the air. If you need to take a breath during this experiment please do; just lower your arm. (After about 30 seconds), Okay everyone can lower their arms and take a breath. Is it reasonable to assume that before you held your breath, you took in a large gulp of air? (All agreed) and after you let your breath out you took in more air then you normally breath? (All agreed). Now change air to food and you have my short answer as to why diets fail. (Nod to Marilyn Wann for idea)

We are at war! It is a war that cannot be won. This is a war where you are being misled. This is a war where hysteria and scare tactics replace science and facts. It is the war on obesity and I am the enemy.

Their weapons are diets. Their tactics are shame, humiliation and vilifying the enemy. They have succeeded *only* in shaming, humiliating, and vilifying.

One of my tactics is to use their own research against them. Around 20 years ago Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared that there are 300,000 deaths due to obesity. I will not dispute this claim here. (This was the start of the build up to war.) Recently the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) had to revise their claim, when trying to raise that figure to 110,000 deaths. Even by their own faulty research the death rate has decreased by more then half. Where are the weapons of mass destruction? I say bring the troops home now.

I joke, but there are casualties in this war. I can lose my job, I can lose my health care, I can lose my apartment, I can lose my children, and I can even lose my life, either by being misdiagnosed or by being refused treatment altogether. Yes, there are casualties in this war.

I do not want this war. As long as we draw battle lines, we are doomed to do battle. I Choose Not To Fight! I have no weapons; I only have compassion, common sense and Health At Every Size. I believe with every fiber of my being that when the issue is about leading a healthy lifestyle instead of weight, then real progress can be made. If health were being discussed, some of the issues

would be: making playgrounds safe so children can play outside, making after school programs part of the school curriculum where there could be supervised activities, getting more organic produce choices in poorer neighborhoods, bringing health clinics back into neighborhoods, making health care available to all. The list of real issues, which we are being sidetracked away from, goes on.

You may not be convinced. You may still want to do battle on the frontlines. But before you strap on your armor, just remember that as the definition of obesity gets lower, you too may become the enemy.