



NAAFA Newsletter

**Official Publication of the National
Association to Advance Fat Acceptance**

Spring 2007

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Calendar of Events

Plus Size Water Aerobics and Social Luncheon, Chicago NAAFA, Sunday, March 25, 2007, www.chicagonaafa.org
ChicagoNAAFA@aol.com

Chapter Meeting, NAAFA Los Angeles, Sunday, March 25, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/naafala

Chapter Dinner, SF Bay Area NAAFA, Saturday, April 7, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/sfba-fat-hub

Social Luncheon, Chicago NAAFA, Saturday, April 14, 2007, www.chicagonaafa.org
or ChicagoNAAFA@aol.com

Chapter Meeting, Rocky Mountain NAAFA, Saturday, April 14, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/rmnaafa

PJ Dance Party, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, April 14, 2007, www.capitalnaafa.org

Spring Rolls In Dinner, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, May 5, 2007, www.capitalnaafa.org

International No Diet Day (several chapters), Sunday, May 6, 2007

Meet & Greet Party, NAAFA Los Angeles, Tuesday, May 8, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/naafala

Chapter Meeting, Rocky Mountain NAAFA, Saturday, May 12, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/rmnaafa

NAAFA Sweeps into the Windy City



On July 10-15, 2007, people of all sizes will come together from every corner of the country to celebrate our size and our lives at this annual fund-raising event. This year, NAAFA has chosen the Chicago area for our annual convention to encourage and promote size acceptance. We will be working closely with the Chicago NAAFA chapter and Linda's Big Connections to bring you the best convention ever.

The Convention will be at the Crowne Plaza at O'Hare International Airport (5440 North River Road, Rosemont, IL). Please visit our home page at <http://naafa.org> and click on the convention banner for more details. This year, we have made it possible for you to register for both your convention package and hotel package on line, right from our website. Early bird prices are good through May 1, 2007 only, so register today!

In the spirit of partnership, members of ASDAH (the Association for Size Diversity and Health) will soon be able to register for their conference at the NAAFA web site. Details coming soon so check the NAAFA web site often.

NAAFA works to eliminate discrimination based on body size and provide fat people with the tools for self-empowerment through public education, advocacy, and member support. This year's convention will encourage people to enjoy Health at Every Size as we participate in workshops and activities such as Water Aerobics, Yoga, Dance, Singing, Writing, Theater and more. Join us as we celebrate life!

ACTION ALERT: Advance Fat Civil Rights in Massachusetts



Massachusetts bill, H.1844, filed by Rep. Byron Rushing, will add height and weight to the anti-discrimination law. *You* can help make this happen! And it's easy.

First, we're asking Massachusetts residents to write a letter (snail mail is better than e-mail) to your representative and senator, asking them to support MA H.1844. If your legislator is a co-sponsor, thank him/her for supporting H. 1844. And ask everyone you know in the state to also write to their legislators!

If you have experienced size discrimination in the state in employment, education, public accommodations or health care, it is *vital* that you tell your legislators! And please forward your story to us, too. Another rep filed a similar bill a couple of years ago on the basis of *one* discrimination complaint from a constituent.

If you'd like to do more, a follow-up phone call or even a personal visit (make an appointment at the State House or at local office hours) will emphasize the depth of your support for the bill.

There will be a hearing before the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, probably in the fall. If you're a constituent of one of the

Chapter Meeting, Rocky Mountain NAAFA, Saturday, June 9, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/rmnaafa

Hurray It's Summer Picnic, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, June 10, 2007, www.capitalnaafa.org

Leather and Lace Dance, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, June 23, 2007, www.capitalnaafa.org

Wet and Wild Pool party, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, June 30, 2007, www.capitalnaafa.org

4th of July party, Chicago NAAFA, Saturday, June 30, 2007, www.chicagonaafa.org or ChicagoNAAFA@aol.com

Chapter Meeting, Rocky Mountain NAAFA, Saturday, July 7, 2007, groups.yahoo.com/group/rmnaafa

National NAAFA Convention, July 10-15, Crowne Plaza at Chicago O'Hare, www.naafa.org

Visit Our Website
naafa.org

:: 916-558-6880

committee members, your voice will have even more impact. As our campaign builds, we'll have more opportunities for volunteers.

For more information, please contact NAAFA Board member Jeanne Toombs at steinwaytoo@verizon.net

LEGISLATORS' CONTACT INFO

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/>

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Rep. _____ (or Sen. _____)

I'm writing to ask you to support (or thank you for supporting) H.1844, which will add height and weight to the anti-discrimination law. People of all sizes deserve basic respect, and large people in particular are routinely discriminated against in employment, health care and education.

(I have faced discrimination....)

Thank you,

your name
your address

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Fat Pride Activist Heather MacAllister Dies



Heather MacAllister, also known as burlesque performer Reva Lucian, the founder of the Big Burlesque and the Fat Bottom Revue (<http://bigburlesque.com/>), passed away on February 13, 2007, in Portland, OR. She had been battling ovarian cancer for the last several years, and was surrounded by close friends and family during her passing. She was a tireless activist for fat people as well as the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

Here are Heather's last wishes: "Please remember to love each other, and to love ourselves. Take care of our minds and bodies, without fail and against all odds. And know, beyond doubt, that we are all beautiful, amazing beings. Never forget. This is what I lived for. Take care of yourselves, you beautiful beings."

In Heather's memory, a fund has been established to provide small scholarships for fat college students to buy clothing that would make them look and feel fabulous. Please make checks to Cullum Law Heather MacAllister College Scholarship Fund (or Cullum Law Scholarship), and mail to Carole Cullum, 1390 Market St., Suite 818, San Francisco, CA 94102.

NAAFA's Open Letter to the Rudd Center

[Editor's Note: The following letter ran as an advertisement in the Yale Daily News on October 6, 2006, a week or so after the Rudd Center held what they termed a think tank meeting for major stakeholders in weight stigma and failed to include NAAFA, the leading fat civil rights organization.]

In its mission statement, the Rudd Center lists preventing "obesity" and reducing weight stigma as two of its three main goals.

The board of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance represents the world's first and foremost civil rights organization for fat people. We, the leaders of the fat civil rights movement, speak from the combined experience of our more than 120 years dedicated to ending anti-fat prejudice and discrimination. We write to tell you this: Every time you talk about "preventing obesity," you stigmatize, medicalize, and dehumanize fat people.

Albert Einstein said, "You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war." You also cannot reduce fat hatred while you fuel fat hatred.

There is a humane option: The Health At Every Size (HAES) approach has been scientifically proven to improve the health of fat people while reducing weight stigma. It is possible to do good without doing harm.

That you insist on stigmatizing fat people while pretending to do the opposite is proof that fat people's wellbeing is not your primary concern.

The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance will sponsor a large and public celebration when the Rudd Center and its leading scholars stop promoting weight stigma on a national and international level.

Weight stigma is a recent development among humans. It will fall from popularity, with or without the help of the Rudd Center or its scholars. In the long history of our species, there have always been fat people. There are fat people now and there will always be fat people in the future. The hope -- so often expressed in Rudd Center materials -- of eradicating fat people is not okay; it is ominously close to eugenics.

Signed: the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance
Co-signed: Jon Robison, PhD, co-editor of the Health At Every Size journal

Stop Targeting Fat Kids!

NAAFA demands that the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation immediately remove their billboards in Massachusetts targeting childhood obesity. We further demand that they cease all radio, television and print advertising in their campaign against fat children, which promotes fear and hatred of larger bodies and body obsession in children, ultimately leading to eating disorders.



Martin Cohen, the Foundation's President/CEO, claims, "The campaign is directed at parents, not children. . . ." Does Mr. Cohen think that the children of Massachusetts are illiterate and incapable of reading billboards or understanding print and television advertising? Children are far more likely to be reading billboards than are their parents who are battling traffic.

Billboards depicting fat kids are extraordinarily harmful to the very kids they are supposedly trying to help. Fat children are already the targets of merciless bullying. This campaign simply gives the bullies permission to do more of the same.

NAAFA supports Health at Every Size (HAES). In the "war on obesity," we are the Peace Movement. HAES says that healthy habits are good for *everyone*, no matter what their size. Healthy habits such as:

- Eat healthy, nutritious foods and enjoy occasional treats.
- Pay attention to your natural hunger and satiety cues.
- Move your body in ways that feel good.
- And love yourself just the way you are!

NAAFA challenges Metrowest to create an advertising campaign that encourages people of all sizes to eat healthy food, add movement to our lives and celebrate our differences.

Susan Green, who helped develop the campaign, said the health risk that worries her the most is an increase in depression among overweight children. Does Mrs. Green believe that seeing gigantic billboards describing their bodies

as unacceptable and bad is supportive of positive mental health? Would it not be difficult to see your children depressed because they are not only bullied at school on a daily basis but also made a public spectacle many times larger than life?

Contact NAAFA for a brochure called "Good News for Big Kids", written by Joanne Ikeda, a mom, wife, university lecturer, Registered Dietician, author, and teen rap group leader. This brochure will help kids and parents understand that all kids deserve love and respect regardless of their body size or shape. Every body is a good body. No one has the right to criticize your body.

Article in *Teaching Tolerance* Magazine Promotes Size Acceptance

Prominent NAAFA members and advisors Marilyn Wann, Paul Campos, Michael Loewy, Deb Burgard, and others are quoted in an article on size acceptance in the Spring 2007 issue of *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (also available at the Tolerance.org website):

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/features.jsp?p=0&is=40&ar=779>

Among other things, the article points out how typical "obesity prevention" efforts harm fat kids. For example, after 3 years of sending home BMI (body mass index, a measure of weight in relation to height) report cards, the rate of "childhood obesity" in Arkansas (38%) has not changed, but 13% of parents reported that their children have been teased because of the new program. The web version of the article includes tips for teaching size diversity and a discussion of the "O" words ("overweight" and "obese"), as well as size acceptance and HAES resources.

Related News in the War on Fat Kids

- On April 10, 2006, basic cable network TLC premiered "Honey We're Killing the Kids!", which purports to improve the eating and exercise habits of kids by scaring them with computer-generated pictures of how they may look after years of bad habits. While no doubt it's a lot of work to raise healthy kids, this is not the sort of help that parents need. Since someone with high-blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease may not even look unhealthy, the emphasis on the age-projected pictures seems to be on fatness, which they represent as bad in and of itself, and as a marker for the aforementioned diseases.

- In good news, the makers of PediaLoss, a quack remedy for fatness in kids as young as 6, agreed on April 6, 2006 to settle Federal Trade Commission charges that they made false and misleading claims for this product. Good news indeed, but it sadly underscores the fact that there is a demand for weight-loss products for chubby children. And where demand persists, supply will reappear.

- The stigma against fat kids can actually motivate them to exercise less rather than more. A paper published online in April 2006 in the Journal of Pediatric Psychology by Eric Storch and others at the University of Florida Departments of Psychiatry and Pediatrics found that a quarter of fat kids studied reported being bullied. The bullying correlated with depression, anxiety, loneliness, and a decrease in physical activity. The study had a small sample size (about 100), was not random, and did not prove causation. But its findings are suggestive. NAAFA Board of Directors member and author Marilyn Wann said, "I remember moments in my childhood when I saw a thin peer doing something, say, swinging a leg while sitting on a swing, and I thought to myself, not in so many words: 'That person gets to swing her leg because her leg is a good leg, one that is welcomed for view by other people and not targeted for reshaping.' If I thought to swing my leg, I would probably not because I'd fear attracting negative attention. I'd not take the same simple pleasure in leg-swinging, for sure. It was a condensed sensation of envy."

- In New Zealand, weight loss surgeons recently (April 2006) called for the government to fund weight loss surgery for teenagers, even though there are no proven health benefits for the surgery. NAAFA member Tricia Brown said, in response, "I weighed well above the weights of these kids when I was 12. I can't imagine dealing with the complications of WLS on top of the normal teen age angst and, then, having to live with those complications for the rest of your life because someone chose to mutilate your body . . . all with 'the best of intentions,' of course."

- May 30, 2006: An excellent essay in the New York Times by Harriet Brown called into question the new, sometimes bizarre, rules that schools have put into place to keep kids from getting fat. The rules, such as banning nuts, sugary foods, and vending machines, seem to be more about anti-fat hysteria rather than promoting health. Ms. Brown reviewed the evidence, showing that these rules have typically not yielded any improvements in health.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/30/health/nutrition/30essa.html>

- June 27, 2006: A study published in the July International Journal of Obesity found that, while physical activity levels vary from child to child, children engage in the same amount of daily activity regardless of their environment or exposure to school-based physical education, suggesting that physical activity is regulated by an internal biological force, calling into question the usefulness of school physical activity programs. Researchers from Peninsula Medical School in Plymouth, United Kingdom, studied nearly 1,500 children of various ages, socioeconomic levels, and locations.

- August 8, 2006: Girls whose families criticize their weight or eating habits may develop lasting problems with body image and self-esteem. Researchers found that of 455 college women with poor body image, more than 80 percent said their parents or siblings had made negative comments about their bodies during childhood. The research was led by Dr. C. Barr Taylor of the Stanford Medical Center in California, and was reported in the journal *Pediatrics*. (See also *Do I Look Fat in This?*, a book by Jessica Weiner, www.withjess.com.)

- August 14, 2006: Some fat on kids means healthier bones. Published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, a study conducted by researchers at the University of Bristol, United Kingdom, found that fat cells in children's tissue appear to stimulate bone growth prior to puberty. The study was based on data from more than 3,000 children whose body fat and bone development were monitored over the course of two years.

- October 11, 2006: Physical activity is unlikely to have a significant effect in reducing levels of obesity amongst pre-school children, but could lay the foundations for a healthier future, a British Medical Journal study revealed. A team of researchers from Glasgow undertook a large study (involving 545 pre-school children from 36 nurseries) to ascertain whether or not an increase in levels of exercise could reduce a child's Body Mass Index (BMI). It didn't.

- January 8, 2007: In a *New York Times* article, reporter Jodi Kantor examines the adverse effects that "BMI report cards" have on young girls, how body size influences the pecking order in high school, and how (one supposes) well-intentioned efforts to improve student health can backfire.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/08/health/08obesity.html>

- Author, eating disorders expert, and NAAFA advisory board member Deb Burgard, commenting on proposed legislation targeting childhood obesity in Virginia, said "We should be having debates about what constitutes a healthy environment for our children, but we should not be having those debates on the backs of fat children."
<http://www.dailypress.com/news/local/virginia/dp-va--xgr-obesitybills0114jan14,0,3393203.story>

- In the January 29, 2007, issue of *Newsweek*, an article titled "Not hungry? No problem," talks about feeding children, and quotes author Elyn Satter and Dr. Robert Kushner from Northwestern Memorial Hospital. The article quotes from a new booklet, "Healthy From the Start," by Dr. Julie Lumeng of the University of Michigan's department of pediatrics and Center for Human Growth and Development. Guidelines include: Don't force-feed; don't use food as a reward; don't ban anything; and talk to your doctor to make sure their growth is consistent.

- February 21, 2007: A video game called "Body Mechanics" is praised in an Associated Press article for battling childhood obesity. Not by encouraging movement like "Dance Dance Revolution", but by presenting old, tired stereotypes of fat=lazy=evil=unhealthy. NAAFA member Lesleigh Owen says, "Is it just me, or is reinforcing fat hatred not synonymous with urging a healthy lifestyle?"

- February 26, 2007: Authorities considered taking 8-year-old Connor McCreddie (of Wallsend, North Tyneside, 300 miles north of London), who weighs 218 pounds, into protective custody unless his mother improved his diet. The boy eats only sweet, salty, and fatty foods and has done so in huge portions since he was a baby. Even though this points to a medical condition such as Prader-Willi syndrome, the media presented his size as the problem rather than a symptom. This is like presenting a case of anorexia nervosa as "The dangers of being thin". (Thanks to Sigrun Danielsdottir for the analogy.) The boy was, for now, allowed to stay with his mother.

Statistical Scare Tactics in the War on Fat Kids: An Example

A paper in the May 2006 issue of the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine by Glen Duncan, Ph.D. of the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine reported a modest increase in diabetes among adolescents, from 0.41% in 1988-1994 to 0.50% in 1999-2002. The data were taken from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Furthermore, as NAAFA Board of Advisors member Glenn Gaesser, Ph.D. (professor of exercise physiology and Program Area Director for the Kinesiology program at the University of Virginia) states, "Of the 0.50% prevalence in the latest survey, less than a third were type 2 diabetes, believed to be lifestyle and fatness related. Therefore, prevalence of type 2 diabetes among US adolescents in the more recent NHANES is less than 2 in one thousand."

The percentage of teens with impaired fasting glucose, a sign of insulin resistance and sometime precursor to diabetes, was also seemingly high in the most recent survey, about 11%. However, this number corresponds to the new upper limit for fasting glucose of 100 mg/dl. Using the pre-2003 standard of 110 mg/dl, the impaired fasting glucose prevalence is less than 2%.

NAAFA Board of Advisors member Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D. (nutrition researcher at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine) adds, "Adults are not reliable in reporting their medical histories. Adolescents are even less so. Fat adults and children are often told they are at risk of diabetes as means of motivating them to lose weight. They will often misinterpret these warnings as being diabetic."

Dr. Ernsberger continues, "This study also illustrates the mess that is made by continual adjustments of risk factors downward. 100 mg/dl is right around the average fasting blood sugar for adults, so it seems they want to say that a slight majority of the population is abnormal. It's unclear that there's any additional risk from a fasting blood sugar of 100 as compared with, say, 90. Some people start to feel hypoglycemic below 80. The problem is the scare mongering tactics which are being used to bash fat people and to force doctors to write more prescriptions."

NAAFA In the News

- NAAFA Board of Advisors member Paul Campos debated Kelly Brownell, head of Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, on Tuesday, January 23, 2007, at the Omni Parker hotel in downtown Boston. The subject was childhood obesity. He also appeared on local radio and cable media outlets.

- The Sacramento Bee interviewed NAAFA Public Relations Chair Peggy Howell on December 3, 2006. She dispelled many myths about fat people, size acceptance, and HAES. Many other newspapers around the United States also carried the article.

- Peggy Howell also appeared in the Las Vegas Review Journal on Sunday, February 11, 2007, promoting size acceptance and quoting playwright George Bernard Shaw: "No diet will remove all the fat from your body, because the brain is entirely fat. Without a brain, you might look good, but all you could do is run for public office."
http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2007/Feb-11-Sun-2007/news

- February 18, 2007: NAAFA Board of Directors member Lisa Tealer was interviewed for a family health series aired on Los Angeles's KABC on the Rules of Attraction. The story focused on what elements make a person attractive. Studies show that first impressions and attitude shapes others' perception of you, independent of your outer appearance. Lisa was quoted that once she no longer hated she became confident enough to become a plus-sized model and aerobics instructor.