



NAAFA Newsletter

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

Winter 2008

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Calendar of Events

Chapter Meeting, NAAFA Los Angeles, Sunday, March 9, 2008, groups.yahoo.com/group/naafala, www.naafala.org, 1-888-NAAFALA

Fattitude Fair, NAAFA Los Angeles, Sunday, April 20, 2008, groups.yahoo.com/group/naafala, www.naafala.org, 1-888-NAAFALA

PJ Dance, Capital NAAFA, Saturday, May 17, 2008, www.capitalnaafa.org

Chapter Meeting, Chicago NAAFA, Date TBA, groups.yahoo.com/group/TheChicagoChapterofNAAFA, www.chicagonaafa.org

Chapter Meeting, Rocky Mountain NAAFA, Date TBA, groups.yahoo.com/group/rmnaafa

Chapter Meeting, New York City NAAFA, Date TBA, groups.yahoo.com/group/NYC-NAAFA

Chapter Meeting, SF Bay Area NAAFA, Date TBA, groups.yahoo.com/group/sfba-fat-hub

Chapter Meeting, Northern Ohio NAAFA, Date TBA, www.ltech.net/naafa

National NAAFA Convention, July 9-13, 2008, Los Angeles Airport Marriott, www.naafa.org, reservations: www.Marriott.com/laxap, group

2008 NAAFA Convention: Get Ready!

The observant among you will note that we've had the dates of the 2008 Convention, July 9-13, in the last three newsletters, as well as being visible on the upper right-hand corner of our home page at <http://naafa.org> for some time now. Now, finally, some more news: The convention will be at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott, and they are now accepting reservations!

The code to book a reservation online at the group rate is NAANAAA. Go to the hotel's website at <http://www.Marriott.com/laxap> and put NAANAAA in the box labeled group code. You can also call their reservations line at (800) 228-9290 and say that you are with the NAAFA Convention to get the group rate.

In addition, we are putting out a call for workshop presenters. We are especially looking for workshops on the following topics:

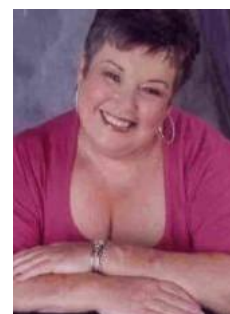
- Self Acceptance and Empowerment
- Healthy Eating
- Learn to Love Your Body
- The Special Needs of a Super Sized Body
- How To Be A Non-Fat Ally
- Resist the War on Obesity (Don't believe everything you hear/read.)
- Be Your Own Healthcare Advocate
- Raising Large Healthy Children
- Aging in My Fat Body
- Creative Writing
- Dance Class
- Daily movement classes such as Water Aerobics, Yoga, Chair Dancing, and others

If you see something on this list that interests you, or care to present on another topic, please send a brief description or outline of your presentation and a possible workshop title to Peggy Howell at naafa_pr@yahoo.com and Lesleigh Owen at goddess_les@yahoo.com. Tell us when you plan to arrive so that we can best fit you into the schedule.

Update: Massachusetts Anti-Discrimination Bill

by Jeanne Toombs, NAAFA Board of Directors Member

Thanks to all NAAFA members for your ongoing support and advocacy for H. 1844, An Act to Eliminate Discrimination on the Basis of Weight and Height, in Massachusetts sponsored by Rep. Byron Rushing. We now have a hearing date for the bill: March 25, 2008. Please contact me at jeanne_toombs@naafa.org if you are interested in testifying before the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development and/or organizing others to testify and speak to legislators following the hearing.



code NAANAAA (more details to come)

Big Fat Health Care Costs

by Susan Conklin, NAAFA Member
<http://unapologeticallyfat.blogspot.com>



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We've all heard the claim that, as fat people, we are a burden on health care and our fellow taxpayers. The UK's National Health Service (NHS) is claiming that obesity costs will soon cripple their public health care system. But do their numbers add up?

The UK's National Audit Office (NAO) states that "obesity" costs their country 500 million GBP (Great Britain pounds) per year. They arrive at that figure by researching various studies that link adiposity to particular diseases, and then calculating the cost of treating fat people for those diseases.

The problem with that method is that thin people get those diseases too. It's only in fat individuals that the disorder is blamed on the adipose tissue, rather than the likelier combinations of genetics, environment, stress and level of fitness. In other words, the number is based entirely on the false assumption that correlation equals causation, and that the disease being treated would not exist if obesity were eliminated (per 2001 NAO report by the Comptroller and Auditor General). If, as many studies are now showing, fatness has little or no bearing on health when fitness is considered, this estimate of 500 million GBP disappears entirely. But let's look at some numbers that do not disappear quite so easily.

According to the NHS, they spend 47.5 Million GBP on prescription weight loss medication per year, an eight-fold increase since 1999. In addition, the British Obesity Surgery Patient Association shows an average of 10,000 weight loss surgeries being performed in the UK each year. An average cost for WLS is 10,000 GBP. Factoring in complications, the UK can expect to spend approximately 116 Million GBP per year on WLS procedures. At least 160.5 Million GBP has also been allocated annually to local and national anti-obesity programs.

So far we're up to 324 Million GBP. As no hard numbers were available for them, I did not account for the cost of TV ads, NHS doctor consultations for dieters, the time and expense of schools to weigh and measure students or police lunch boxes, or the time of elected officials to fight for additional anti-obesity policies.

In other words, the British government is spending (at the very least) 324 Million GBP, or US \$639,772,672 on failed attempts to make their citizens not fat. So who is really costing whom? (And this is all aside from recent studies showing that fat people might even be *saving* money for the health care system.)

Imagine what that money could do if invested in HAES instead of hate.

Update on NAAFA Life Member

NAAFA Life Member Barbara Eileen Novack is in Jewish Convalescent & Nursing Home (JCNH), Room 115B, 7920 Scotts Level Rd, Baltimore, MD 21208. She hopes to be back in her apartment in a few months. Please write and wish her well.

Lifetime's *How to Look Good Naked*

by Linda Ramos, NAAFA Los Angeles President Pro Tem

"Zero is not a size, it's a warning sign!" says Carson Kressley in the new Lifetime series *How To Look Good Naked*, the new American version of a British show.

Marketed as a makeover show, both internal and external, this eight episode series seeks to undo some of the damage done to women by the warped representation of feminine beauty, so pervasive in our culture. Indeed, in



the opening credits, a bevy of beautifully dressed, differently sized women join up and march behind Carson, shedding most of their garments as they walk along. It's a powerful moment, indicating immediately that this show is seriously different.

Episode one is Layla, so tortured by her self-image that she's banned all full-length mirror from her home, and Margo, whose life-saving cancer treatment gave her a new set-point, is episode two. Both are midsize guests claiming to "need" to lose 50 lbs. Each is put through a set of exercises to beautify the outside and bolster the inside.

"It doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful," Carson assures Layla as he points at her much-hated arm flab during mirror sessions that are visibly traumatic for both women. Both visibly cringe when they learn that complete strangers critiqued their skivvy-clad bodies. The shock is replaced by disbelief as a continuous flow of compliments utter from the mouths of both men and women. The gals eventually acknowledge the compliments may be true, but the disbelief never fully leaves their faces.

It's a revealing moment when the women are asked to size themselves up (against other women both smaller and larger) and they can't accurately do it, demonstrating how distorted body perception can be. And it's here that that self-esteem begins to gain a true foothold. Clearly each of the women leaves the show on higher plane of self-esteem. They go home armed with the knowledge that a) other people find them sexy and beautiful, b) bigger girls can wear beautiful clothes too and c) they aren't as fat as they thought they were.

Notably, this is not a fat acceptance show (not when the most pivotal moment is showing one how fat you aren't!), which means that the newly found self-esteem is likely to be lost the moment they gain more weight. And if the show follows the British series, the guests on the show will stay firmly in the average woman/lower midsize range (ignoring the rest of us).

Nevertheless, the show is a delightful step in the right direction, bringing a much needed reality check to those lost in the mire of rigid beauty ideals, and it wonderfully reinforces what we've been saying for a very long time: Beauty comes in ALL sizes.

Weigh-Ins at the Doctor's Office

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

When it comes to any diagnostic procedure (in this case, weighing), the power is with the patient to consider its risks and benefits, and decline a procedure that fails to impress. In my case, having my weight on any medical chart poses a direct threat to my health and life (by leading to a lack of treatment) that is not worth any clinical use it might ever serve. Since I cannot prevent this information from entering my chart, I have been deemed uninsurable based on my weight alone. Any actual diagnosis in my records just compounds that basic lack of access.



I think "demeaning" and "antifeminist" are excellent and totally legitimate challenges for the practice of weighing. Besides being a barrier to proper care, weigh-ins expose me both to dangerous "cures" for my difference. Also, so very many fat people avoid doctors and forego preventive care because they reasonably enough don't want to be lectured about a characteristic they're unlikely to be able to change. [Editor's Note: See the May 8, 2007 Media and Research Roundup item in this issue for evidence of this.]

I gave a talk a few years ago at a Planned Parenthood clinic. I challenged them to be the first truly humane PP clinic and stop routine weighing of patients. A nurse practitioner, also a larger-than-average-weight woman, researched the reasons why they might need to weigh anyone immediately after my talk and reported back that there were only two situations where it might help. Both had to do with the effectiveness of

certain birth control treatments with larger women, and there were alternate treatments available such that there was an easy workaround. I've long imagined that PP might be the cool wedge on this question, but I'm not holding my breath, either.

I'm pretty angry about this topic these days, because I recently spent several hours with a friend in the ER, advocating for her to get a secondary kind of diagnostic test because she'd been denied the first-choice test based on weight. Gotta love it when our "care" givers are more concerned about some fancy-ass ball bearings than they are about whether a fat person lives or dies.

Media and Research Roundup

[Editor's Note: Another big edition of our roundup, as we start getting caught up.]

April 4, 2007: Dr. Traci Mann and other researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles find that (guess what?) diets don't work. The research is published in the April issue of the journal *American Psychologist*. The UCLA researchers analyzed 31 diet studies that followed people two to five years after they went on diets. People on diets typically lost five to 10 per cent of their starting weight in the first six months, but roughly two-thirds gained it all back and then some within four or five years. "Most of them would have been better off not going on the diet at all," says Mann. "Their weight would be pretty much the same, and their bodies would not suffer the wear and tear from losing weight and gaining it all back."

<http://www.physorg.com/news94906931.html>

http://mann.bol.ucla.edu/index_files/Page732.htm

April 7, 2007: An article on Bankrate.com looks at the costs of weight loss programs, revealing costs as high as \$1,170 per month for NutriSystem. Hopefully the outrageous costs are a wakeup call for those considering dieting; even so, the article is disappointing in that it credulously accepts the verbal weight loss claims of sales representatives.

http://www.bankrate.com/brm/news/pf_weight_loss_programs_a1.asp

April 11, 2007: The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) airs "Fat: What No One Is Telling You". Although the program highlighted wonderful fat rights activists such as Pat Lyons and Toni Martin of the NAAFA-sponsored WomanCare Plus project, Lisa Tealer (of WomanCare Plus and the NAAFA Board of Directors), and the Phat Fly Girls, it was essentially one big commercial for weight loss by any means, be it surgery, exercise three hours a day, or obsessive food behavior. Size discrimination was seen as a bad thing, but rather than eliminating the discrimination, the program advocates eliminating fat people. Not so coincidentally, the program is sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, which makes diet drugs.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/takeonestep/fat/index.html>

<http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/CA6416866.html>

April 16, 2007: The Associated Press runs an article on how fat women are seen as especially desirable in the African desert nation of Mauritania. But this isn't really size acceptance: average-sized girls are force-fed until they are fat. These traditions are now threatened by Western ideas of thinness. Let's hope that Mauritania can come to respect people of all sizes.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=3046386>

April 20, 2007: In what is possibly the most ridiculous "the sky is falling" story yet, the Washington Post reports that baby boomers appear to be less healthy than their parents. "Appear" in this context means that, when surveyed, baby boomers say they are less healthy. NAAFA Advisory Board Chairperson Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D. (associate professor of nutrition at Case Western Reserve University) notes, "When you look at actual numbers for cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar and compare them to 30 years ago, they are all better. What is worse is what people say about these things."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/19/AR2007041902458.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/19/AR2007041902458.html>

April 23, 2007: Researchers from the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, publish a study of over 10,000 Americans aged 60 or older in

the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, showing that (1) Overweight is not associated with increased risk for disability (2) Overweight is associated with lowest mortality, and (3) Overweight is associated with highest disability-free life expectancy. More data to challenge conventional wisdom on body weight and health.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/167/8/774>

April 23, 2007: Another study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* by Duke University researchers shows that heavier employees had higher rates of worker's compensation claims against Duke U. But Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D. (nutrition researcher at Case Western Reserve and NAAFA Board of Advisors chair) notes that the study did not control for the type of work that is being done. "I'll bet they're comparing fat loading dock and maintenance workers with skinny professors and deans," says Ernsberger. Science writer and NAAFA Board of Advisor member Sandy Szwarc looked at the study in detail in her blog, and came to much the same conclusion.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/167/8/766>

<http://junkfoodscience.blogspot.com/2007/04/seeing-only-fat.html>

May 3, 2007: New York Times science writer Gina Kolata releases her book *Rethinking Thin*. The book examines the history of American thought on weight loss, and presents data from the 1940s through today showing that (guess what?) diets don't work. (This book is now on NAAFA's Recommended Reading List.)

<http://www.naafa.org/info/booklist.html>

May 8, 2007: Dr. Jeanne M. Ferrante, of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, is lead author in a study published in the June 2007 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* showing that very fat women are less likely to be screened for breast and cervical cancer. The reasons could be lack of properly-sized gowns, exam tables, and other equipment, as well as doctors' negative attitudes toward the fat.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db=pubmed&uid=17533069>

May 12, 2007: New Zealand's leading newspaper, the *Herald*, reports on Waikato University sociologist Natalie Cowley, who asks "What does it tell us if 5-year-olds in our society would prefer to lose an arm than be fat?" She says that we have developed an unhealthy "moral panic" about fatness. On the other hand, she says, "Of course I wouldn't want [my children] to be what is called 'morbidly obese'." Baby steps, I guess.

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=204&objectid=10439312

May 26, 2007: A new retrospective, "The Baroque World of Fernando Botero" at the San Antonio Museum of Art and Southwest School of Art & Craft, draws large crowds eager to see Botero's plus-sized art (oil paintings, drawings, pastels, and bronze sculptures) showing beautiful fat men and women. "I'm glad I came. Now I can feel proud of my weight," says one attendee.

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA052707.08B.BOTERO.31457bc.html>

May 2007: An editorial in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* calls for "obesity" to be recognized as a mental disorder. The editorial claims "Obesity is characterized by compulsive consumption of food and the inability to restrain from eating despite the desire to do so." Yes, I, a fat man, feel compelled to eat roughly three times a day! Silly me, I thought that was normal. (In related news, in July, Kelly Brownell of Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity calls a big meeting to discuss the issue of "food addiction.")

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/164/5/708>

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-07-09-food-addiction_N.htm

June 13, 2007: The Food and Drug Administration's expert panel unanimously rejected the weight-loss drug rimonabant (once called Acomplia) after hearing testimony that it increases the risk of suicidal thoughts, even in patients without a history of depression. (Note: On June 29, 2007, drug maker Sanofi-Aventis SA withdrew its application for approval in the US.)

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-06-13-zimulti_N.htm

June 20, 2007: European research shows that "obese" patients have half the risk of dying after a heart attack compared with "normal" weight patients. The research, led by Joachim Buettner, the head of

interventional cardiology at Herz-Zentrum Bad Krozingen, Germany, was published in the June 2007 *European Heart Journal*. Articles reporting this focused on how this "doesn't mean it's OK to pack on the pounds," rather than realizing that fatness is not a death sentence.

<http://eurheartj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/28/14/1694>

June 25, 2007: More good news for fatties: Fat people have a lower risk of developing tuberculosis, based on a study of 42,116 people 65 years or older in Hong Kong, published in June 25 issue of *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070625193438.htm>

June 26, 2007: Fat, sexy song and dance group the Glamazons receive a standing ovation on the TV show *America's Got Talent*. All the judges were impressed, praising the group for representing the plus size community, for having the courage to follow their hearts, for their beauty, and their talent! They went on to make it to the top eight.

<http://glamazongirls.com>

June 2007: The Dressing Room Project gets attention in fat blogs. It's a "a girl-powered rebellion to free girls and women from the bonds of media-imposed standards of beauty" by posting positive body image cards mirrors in women's dressing rooms. (Note: their website appears to be down at the moment; their cafepress page is linked below.)

<http://www.cafepress.com/dressingroom>

July 1, 2007: IndyStar.com reports that Clarion Health Partners plans to ding its workers up to \$30 per biweekly paycheck for smoking, having high cholesterol, being fat, and other attributes. The article outlines similar plans by other employers, part of an overall trend of scapegoating fat workers. (Note: The *Los Angeles Times* picked this story up later.)

<http://m.indystar.com/detail.jsp?key=63830&full=1>

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1873321/posts>

July 2, 2007: An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on MRI machines for fat patients quotes NAAFA Board of Directors co-chair Frances White as saying "With the obesity epidemic . . . the hospitals should realize that they're going to have to get equipment that services our needs." Frances was, of course, misquoted; for the real quote, see Peggy's response to the Big Fat Blog entry linked below.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/07/02/OBESITY.TMP>

<http://www.bigfatblog.com/mris-bay-area-did-naafa-call-it-epidemic>

<http://www.bigfatblog.com/mris-bay-area-did-naafa-call-it-epidemic>

July 3, 2007: Guess what? Diets don't work. Dr. Michael Dansinger and other researchers from Tufts-New England Medical Center in Boston publish findings in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* that people on diets typically lose about 10 or so pounds over 12 months, and gain it back later.

<http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/abstract/147/1/41>

July 2007: The new musical movie *Hairspray* strikes a blow for fat pride, getting good box office and good reviews in the process. The movie, based on the Broadway show (in turn based on the 1988 movie by John Waters) features fat actress Nikki Blonsky as Tracy Turnblad, actor John Travolta (in possibly the most expensive, lovingly crafted, fat suit ever) as Tracy's shy mother, and Queen Latifah as the big, brassy Motormouth Maybelle.

July 20, 2007: NAAFA members Kristie Agee and Mary Ray Worley post a video of their impromptu performance at the NAAFA Convention in Chicago. The clip features the song "God Bless the Blues", written by Agee and Nashville writer and singer Liz Johnson. The song is about the goodness in tough times. Kristie writes, "After all, how could we truly enjoy a breezy 70 degree day if we did not know the intense heat of a 98 degree scorcher?"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86EnB6CwnJ0>

July 23, 2007: Fat comedian Mo'Nique takes her F.A.T. (Fabulous and Thick) Chance plus-size modeling contest to Paris; the contest is chronicled in a two-hour special on the Oxygen Network. In an article in the *Washington Post*, author and NAAFA Board of Directors member Marilyn Wann praises the show for celebrating fat beauty.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/23/AR2007072301157.html>

August 2, 2007: The Travel Channel airs "XXL Travel", addressing issues that affect fat people as we travel. The producers follow NAAFA members and others as they travel to the 2006 BBW Network's Vegas Bash.

<http://discussions.travelchannel.com/eve/forums/a/cfrm/f/6221948709>

August 5, 2007: The *Boston Globe* publishes an article in support of a Massachusetts bill to end size discrimination. NAAFA Board of Directors member Jeanne Toombs is interviewed. Hurray, Jeanne!

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2007/08/05/do_we_really_need_a_law_to_protect_fat_workers/

August 2007: Satirical news source *The Onion* posts a mock news video showing panelists debating the question "Are we shaming fat kids enough?" NAAFA Advisory Board Chairperson Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D. notes "The panelists are nearly indistinguishable from the real 'obesity experts' that they have on news programs."

http://www.theonion.com/content/video/in_the_know_should_we_be_shaming

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