



ONBOARD

CANVASBACK MISSIONS | FALL 2020

FROM THE WELLNESS DIRECTOR

Tanner Smith



With Special Thanks To:



DATELINE EXPERTS
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Imagine you are speeding down the road as fast as you can go but unknowingly, you are heading straight for a cliff. At what point would you want someone to warn you? When would you want to start slowing down or changing directions? Early on right? Not just before you leap off!

At the Canvasback Wellness Center, we take the same approach to health. We warn people well before they reach that cliff. In the case of the Marshall Islands, that cliff is diabetes. Each year we see more and more people become diabetic. This is why we are focusing on an “early warning” approach.

With partners like the Center for Disease Control, the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, and the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) we are working with prediabetics and elementary school students to prevent diabetes from ever happening.

In a society where 1 out of every 3 adults has diabetes, we have a lot of work ahead of us. But thanks to all the hard work of our community lifestyle coaches, community health workers, zone nurses, and trained cooking staff we are seeing changes already. We currently have over 100 people enrolled in a year-long course to reverse their prediabetes with lifestyle changes to avoid going over that cliff.

Through our partnership with WDF, we have reached over 3,000 students on Majuro and have helped create new health curriculum and sports programs. Now the Ministry of Education has asked for our help in developing a school lunch policy that includes healthy local foods. We are doing a physical activity and nutrition study with 1,000 students on Majuro to look at the relationship between childhood obesity and malnutrition with economic status and dietary habits. This will be the first ever study of its kind and we are anxious to see the results.

Each week we continue to see progress and see people (and kids) turning the wheel away from the cliff of diabetes towards healthy lifestyles. We have a ways to go, but we know what direction to head!



HEALTH FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



Often times, health is a family matter. For Jolynn and her 8-year-old son Ranley, it's not so much about genetics as it is about having someone to support you. When Jolynn was diagnosed with diabetes by the Community Lifestyle Program (a coalition program Canvasback Wellness is a part of) she took it very seriously. For four weeks she attended the Friday morning meetings to learn about exercise and diet and she took the lessons to heart by cooking healthy vegetables for her family. In fact, she was so dedicated to overcoming her health issues that when the Wellness Center put out a call for community health workers, she jumped at the opportunity and became one of two women selected. She received training and now works in her community providing health screenings and helping patients stay on schedule with their health appointments.

With all her new knowledge, Jolynn knew exactly what to do when Ranley came home from school and said he could no longer bring cookies, candies, or junk food for snacks at school. She started

packing him fruit, sandwiches, boiled eggs, and his favorite snack boiled green banana. Ranley has been helping his mom too. Every morning at 5 am, he wakes up to accompany the rest of his family on a morning walk to get their exercise before it gets too hot in the tropical sun.

Jolynn is doing her best to control her diabetes and to help her family stay healthy. Ranley, hopefully, will never be diabetic. With a mom like Jolynn and new opportunities at his school, he has a really good shot!

This year, the public school system hired PE teachers for every school, after the Wellness Center helped them develop a PE curriculum tailored for the Marshall Islands. With the help of a grant from World Diabetes Foundation, we bought playground and sports equipment for each of the schools. So now Ranley has the opportunity to improve his balance, hand-eye coordination, and other skills to improve brain development. Along with healthy food options available at school and a new garden program providing fresh produce, Ranley is really learning healthy habits!

On top of that, Ranley is helping his community overcome the diabetes epidemic. This year he's taking part in a study of 1st, 3rd, and 5th graders by wearing a bracelet called an accelerometer that tracks his activity and sleep patterns. This data will help give us a better picture of Marshallese children's health and will allow us to create better programs to reverse diabetes. So sometimes, a child needs the help of a good mom to make healthy choices. And sometimes a mom needs the support of a child. And with a community working together like a family, the Marshall Islands can beat diabetes!



A TRUCKLOAD OF WELLNESS



One of the most exciting steps towards health on Majuro has been a two-pronged program to provide healthy food to kids in the local schools. The Canvasback Wellness Center has been instrumental in helping many school principals ban junk food on their campus. We have also supported local legislation to prohibit stores within 50 yards of any school from selling junk food during school hours. That means that a generation of young Marshallese students are growing up with a healthy diet and the tools to make good food choices.

But Canvasback has taken it one step further. It's not uncommon for a kid to start their day with a donut or sugary cereal washed down with Kool-Aid. So we got to work on a new project to provide a healthy breakfast! Thanks to funds from our donors and the New Zealand Consulate, we have a full service mobile kitchen, basically a super health-food truck, called Waan Lomor!

In Marshallese Waan Lomor means a place to go for health and safety and that's exactly what we want our truck to be. Waan Lomor is parked at a local school for a month and serves free healthy breakfasts so students get used to eating things like oatmeal and whole-wheat pancakes. You should see the throngs of kids we have lining up for a good, healthy start to their day!

After a month, Waan Lomor moves to another school, but the program doesn't end. Thanks to our partnership with the Ministry of Education, we are training the school vendors to make these meals so when the truck leaves, the students still have access to power-foods!





940 Adams Street, Ste. R
Benicia, CA 94510

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YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

In these strange times, we know more than ever that Canvasback is only made possible by people like you. We're starting our annual PHONEATHON and looking forward to talking to you! However, if you want to get ahead, please consider using the enclosed envelope to donate or go online at:
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(707) 746-7828

info@canvasback.org

