

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES *(part 1)*

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by Donna Gilbertson

Concerned about Overweight, Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Elevated Cholesterol and Heart Disease? Eager to do something about it? Want to get at the causes of these chronic diseases to turn them around?

Then attend a one-hour Free CHIP Information Session repeated on March 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, and 23 in the Fellowship Room of the Loma Linda University Church from 6:30 to 7:30 PM (11125 Campus Street in Loma Linda). You will have a chance to preview the CHIP program (Coronary Health Improvement Project), its components and beautiful study materials. Learn what is making a difference in the lives of thousands of graduates.

From there, you may enroll in the five-week CHIP program which is returning to Loma Linda by popular demand. "The CHIP program is designed to reverse and prevent common lifestyle diseases, such as overweight, diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and heart disease," according to Mary Chun, one of the co-directors of the Loma Linda chapter program.

This popular lifestyle intervention program is scheduled to begin on Sunday, March 28 with the final session on April 29. Contact Mary Chun for more information: marychun@hotmail.com. The program is fully supported by the 6,000-member Loma Linda University Church and is co-sponsored by the Department of Preventive Medicine, Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

CHIP is an affordable five-week lifestyle education program pioneered by Dr. Hans Diehl, director of the Lifestyle Medicine Institute and a Clinical Professor of Preventive Medicine in the School of Medicine.

The primary focus of CHIP is to empower patients through education, motivation, and inspiration to simplify their diet and to get into a regular exercise program. In addition to nightly video lectures by Dr. Hans Diehl, participants enjoy practical food demonstrations, Q & A sessions, and motivational age-appropriate exercise incentives.

Co-director, Mary Chun, is a nurse connected with the Loma Linda Heart Institute, and is assisted by members of the church's Health and Wellness team. "If you have been diagnosed with heart disease, type II diabetes, or have high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, or triglycerides, or you have been wrestling with depression, then this program is a must for you," said Mary.

According to Dr. Diehl, the CHIP program was inspired by his research and experience at the Pritikin Longevity Center in Southern California and his work with Denis Burkitt, MD, the British surgeon famous for his work with fiber and the disease that carries his name, the Burkitt Lymphoma. Many years ago, Burkitt postulated, "I consider the discovery that Western killer diseases are largely lifestyle-related and therefore subject to prevention if not reversibility, as the greatest medical discovery of the 20th century." He believed that nothing was more important to maintaining and improving health than a simpler diet, more foods-as-grown, and a consistent fitness program.

The CHIP program was born in 1988 when Dr. Sid Kettner, an alumnus of the School of Medicine of Loma Linda University, invited Diehl to give the annual public health lecture on the reversibility of modern chronic diseases in the town of Creston in British Columbia, Canada. Diehl declined, because he said "Since these modern killer diseases are largely lifestyle related, and since they have to do with habit patterns, one lecture won't make a lot of difference for most people. But if you are really serious about changing habits, then you have to do something for 21 days every day." And that initiated the first CHIP program. More than 400 persons from a town of 5,000 accepted the challenge to take responsibility of their health and became charter members of this program.

Since then, with the help of state-of-the-art videos, the CHIP program is being conducted by trained and certified CHIP directors in hospitals, corporations and churches in many countries. More than 500 teams have been trained in the US and Canada, in Australia, New Zealand and the British Isles.

Endorsed by the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, CHIP aims at reducing coronary risk factors through the adoption of better health habits and lifestyle choices. A lifestyle and health assessment called the *HeartScreens* take place at the beginning and end of the CHIP program. This allows participants to track the changes in their various cholesterol numbers, triglycerides, fasting blood sugar and blood pressure readings as well as changes in their weight and medication requirements.

Over 50,000 participants have completed the program worldwide, and clinical results have been published in 17 peer-reviewed medical journals, among them the American Journal of Cardiology, the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, the Journal of Preventive Medicine and the Journal of the American Dietetic Association. Brent Hildebrand, an anesthesiologist at the Redlands Community Hospital, strongly supports the program. He participated in the Calimesa CHIP program in January 2005 and volunteered in programs in 2006 and 2007. Since completing the program, he has lost over 65 lbs, cut his triglyceride levels in half, and lowered his total cholesterol to below 100, and all of that without any medication. Walking quite consistently 3 miles a day, he reports a significant increase in energy. "I've never felt better," he said.

CHIP is a five-week lifestyle change and intervention program and it's coming to Loma Linda and vicinity. It is offered by trained volunteers as an educational program to augment the clinical services of your personal physician. To sign up for the Free Information Session or to directly register for the 5-week CHIP program, please call 909-801-2846.

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES *(part 2)*

I have decided to follow CHIP (Coronary Heart Improvement Program) in my ongoing effort to get my weight within a more desirable range. I have been working out regularly, four to five days a week in this effort, but the numbers that stare back from my scale have, thus far, refused to budge. I decided to give the CHIP a try, to not only make those numbers kinder and gentler, but also to improve my general health. After an introductory meeting, I had decided to sign up for a blood screening to see where I stand now, and how far this program can take me.

Thursday morning, bright and early, I drive to the Seventh Day Adventist Church to have a heart screen done as part of CHIP. I have been promised a hearty breakfast in exchange for my participation in this screening. Of course, my idea of a hearty breakfast usually includes strong black coffee, eggs, potatoes, and maybe a stray piece of sausage or two. I am pretty sure this is not on the menu for me today.

The event is very well-organized, with a variety of stations to visit, in order, before we are fed breakfast. I start off with having my blood pressure taken before I move on to having my blood drawn. So far, so good. I am chatting with friends as we move through the queue. The next station is stashed cunningly in the corner, and is enough to make me groan aloud! There, in the back corner, sits a doctor's scale! Are you kidding me? Nobody mentioned that Monday night! Grrrrrrr! I remove my shoes, knowing that will bring those ugly numbers down by at least one. The kind lady in charge of this station doesn't bat an eye as she writes those numbers on my chart. Yikes, they are written down in triplicate! Onward through a discussion of the quick start program and a chance to meet with a doctor. Now the only doctors I have seen in the last twenty years have been my kids' pediatrician and my OB/GYN, so this is a good opportunity to actually ask some questions about my general health and wellness. Dr. Arnot looks over the information I had provided in the lifestyle evaluation, making suggestions. I was actually enjoying this discussion until he checks the box suggesting I cut down or eliminate caffeine. "Noooooooooo," I groan aloud, "I LOVE coffee." To be honest, I probably underreported the number of caffeinated beverages I drink in a week, writing twenty-eight in the box provided. I am sure this number is probably closer to thirty-five. He is patient, explaining why this love of mine is not really a healthy choice for me. I listen, not especially happy with this turn of events.

Finally, breakfast! I am actually pouting about the idea of having to cut down or eliminate coffee idea when I get to the Rotary table to which I have been assigned. Different groups sponsor tables for CHIP. There are tables sponsored by Rotary, Beyond Fitness, Feather River Hospital, and Country Harvest. Breakfast is beautifully presented. There are trays of fresh fruit, granola, and an incredibly delicious barley and fruit concoction, which entices me to have seconds. There is however, no coffee. There is herbal tea and some instant beverages that are supposed to taste like coffee. I didn't even look at them as I head back to my table. The breakfast is wonderful, and I survive the morning, even without my usually four cups of coffee. On the way out, I was given a whole slew of books tote included, a cute little red water bottle and ye gads, homework to do!

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES (part 3)

Have you ever noticed that whenever you start something new, and good for you, there are roadblocks thrown in your way almost immediately? So began my journey with the Coronary Health Improvement Program, CHIP. I had decided to follow the quick start program on Thursday. It didn't sound too difficult. I am to eat primarily hot, whole-grain cereals and fruit for the first three days, and gradually add other foods as prescribed by the booklet I was given Monday. I go shopping, to make sure I have enough cereal and fruit and dutifully make cereal for my dinner, while fixing the meat-loving men in my family their usual fare. My son looks at the red bowl of hot cereal, shakes his head sadly, and announces, "This barbeque chicken you made for dinner taste fantastic." Grinning, he licks the barbeque sauce from his fingers. So not fair! My husband reminds me that we are to attend a fundraiser Saturday night. How am I going to do this? I want to attend the fundraiser; we already have the tickets, and our friends will be there. I certainly can't take hot cereal with me, so what am I to do? These events, though worthy in nature generally do not serve food that would go along with what I am trying to do. This is where I remind myself that I am NOT on a diet. I am making lifestyle changes, to improve my health. SO, if I can't follow the program to a "T" then I simply have to make the best choices I can.

Saturday night comes, and I have been very good for three days prior, not veering from the hot cereal and fruit even once. As we stand in the buffet line, I see that this is going to be harder than I thought. They are serving lasagna with Italian sausage, salad and rolls. I load the plate with salad, add a little bit of dressing, take a roll that appears to be whole grain, skip the butter and ask to have the piece of lasagna to be cut, not in half, but in thirds, and take one third. Did I mention that I love lasagna?! Back at the table, nobody, except me, even notices that I have a plate of mostly salad. The rest of the weekend is uneventful, and I am looking forward to the first full week of CHIP.

One of the many benefits to following this program is that I do not have to cook dinner for an entire week! I could definitely get used to this kind of treatment. An aspect of the local CHIP program is to provide meals along with their lectures, to show those of us in the program how delicious vegetarian food can be. I do not even have the associated guilt of "going out to dinner" every night while leaving the men behind, as both my husband and son will be gone for the all four nights of the first week of CHIP. Spring Break and softball to the rescue!

Monday night comes, and I am starving! I have had a busy day I and have to hustle to get to the 6:00pm start of dinner. I watch with interest the food demonstrations provided each night. I had no idea you could make "butter" from cornmeal. Delicious! The women who do these demonstrations really make it look easy. They also provide recipes for everything we eat, so that we can replicate these dinners at home. Tonight I learn that affluence has a negative impact on a society's health. At first this theory sounds a little off, after all, poverty is generally associated with disease, not affluence. However, as Dr. Hans Diehl explained in our video, more money generally means a "richer" diet, higher in fat. This fat, found in so much of our diet, not only hangs out on our thighs and bellies, but also lines the inside of our arteries, causing atherosclerotic plaque to build up. This is not good news for those of us in America, as the average American consumes 135 pounds of fat each year! Yes, each year. I was shocked by this number. So, even if I eat a little better than average, does that mean I eat over one hundred pounds of fat each year? Eewwww!

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES *(part 4)*

Healthy, delicious dinners! This is definitely one of the perks of the CHIP program. Another perk has been the food demonstrations each night. The nutritionists who do these demonstrations are able to generally duplicate our dinners in the short fifteen minutes they are given at the start of our meetings. If I could only have one of knowledgeable women at my house, I would have no problem with eating this way. I have always fancied myself a good cook, but trying to cook delicious food without butter, cheese, meat, eggs, etc is definitely more challenging than I had anticipated. Dinners are generally the most difficult, as I, like most people I know, am accustomed to having meat as the main course. I then generally build the rest of dinner to go along with whatever meat I have chosen. Though fairly common, this is probably not the best way to think about dinner. “If you have to have meat, think of it as a flavoring” is the instruction given by CHIP. I think I can manage that. I don’t have to have meat at every dinner. It might take some convincing to get the men in my house to go along with this idea, however. They have not exactly bought into this way of eating; this means I frequently make a dinner for the guys, and then something else for myself. Generally I am not as creative when I am making a second dinner. I guess I may have to break out the cookbook they gave me at the health screening, and actually use it!

Eating out has also been an experience while trying to follow the CHIP. It seems that there are some choices for those who wish to avoid meat, but those choices are much more limited when you also wish to avoid dairy and eggs. Frequently I see something on the menu that sounds like it might be okay, only to discover it is laden with fats and cholesterol. I have eaten a lot of salads, but there are times when I want hot food and something more substantial. I have tried the new restaurant, Garden Fresh Bistro, at the Wellness Center at Feather River Hospital. This was a very pleasant surprise! The food was delicious, and all of it was CHIP approved. There were burritos, wraps, soups, veggie burgers, and many other choices. I had a burrito with my daughter and mom-in-law. We all enjoyed our food and thought it was worth the trip. I will definitely return, though maybe when the weather is warmer, so I can sit outside.

I have enjoyed the DVD series at each meeting, though I have figured out that much of what I have grown up believing, has not exactly been accurate. I have always thought that drinking milk made strong bones. What I have learned over the course of this program however, suggests that drinking milk and eating too much protein may actually take calcium from the bones. Apparently women in countries that consume a great deal of meat and dairy products actually have a higher incidence of osteoporosis than women in countries where there is far less of these products. This flies in the face of the famous milk commercials I grew up watching which stated, “Milk, it does a body good.” I can still see those famous moustaches on various actors and athletes to promote milk drinking. It is no wonder that Americans are overweight and undernourished. So much of the information we have been given is contradictory. How are we supposed to know what to believe? Years ago I made a conscious decision to feed my family less red meat, and more chicken. I did this to make my family healthier. I have discovered that this well-meaning decision didn’t really provide the benefits I thought it would. I also decided to only buy 100% whole wheat bread. My son was not especially enamored with this decision, but it was one of the better decisions I made. Like most moms I know, I want to give my family the healthiest choices I can, but it takes some detective work to figure out what exactly those choices are. It also takes practice to make those choices as appealing as the other options available.

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES (part 5)

Results, I want to see some results! Yesterday would have been better than today, if you know what I mean. After significantly cutting back, yes, even avoiding animal products and exercising faithfully, I am hoping to see those dreaded numbers change. The old pink scale that squats in my bathroom has not been in a big hurry to reward my efforts. For a week or two I shoved it under the claw tub, trying to ignore its call. Then I would give in, slide it back to where it usually sits, and stand in front of it, hoping that this day it would beam back numbers kinder than those I with which I started. I stand there, tentative, not wanting to be disappointed.

I know I am healthier, better hydrated, and stronger than I used to be. This should be enough to keep me happy. However, like many women I know, I want quantitative results as well. My clothes are getting loose, so I should see something happen in the way of numbers. I take a deep breath, and step gently onto either side of the needle. I look down and try to focus on the little lines. Really? I look again. That can't be right, can it? I step off and go through the entire process again. The numbers remain the same. I have lost eight pounds! I know that is not a "big" number, but it is the first time in years that those numbers have gone down. I am afraid to say anything. What if I gain those pounds back? So I keep the happy news to myself for another week, just to make sure that they stay that way for a bit.

I decide to try another test, jeans shopping. For the last five years, my size has been consistent. Some styles fit better than others, but I have had the same numbers on the inside label now for quite a while. I take the Christmas money I have been saving and go to buy a new pair of jeans. I gravitate to my familiar size, pick up a few pairs that I like, and then, just for kicks, grab the next size down in the styles I chose. I hang them on the cart and roll to the dressing rooms. I purposely do not look at the sizes as I grab a pair to try on. I just want to see whether I like them, and not be influenced too much by the numbers. The first pair I try on, I don't like. They don't fit like jeans should. They are too loose! This is a new problem for me. I try them on in a smaller size, and they fit! Not only do they fit, but they look good! I end up buying two pair of jeans, and a blouse to celebrate.

I have talked to others doing the CHIP program, and they are seeing results as well. I have also started another exercise boot camp with the ever-perky Stephanie. Between the new eating habits and the exercise, I am, at long last starting to see some results. Will I have what it takes to keep it going that way? Tonight's video dealt with that very subject. Dr. Diehl discussed how we make our "new" habits into a way of life. He used an illustration of going to a buffet, Most would immediately grab for the delicious-looking dessert. Then, we might pause and think about what that dessert would "do" for or to us. We might decide to forgo the dessert, because we have been working hard and decided instead to grab a delicious piece of fruit. The second time around, it is easier to do that. Eventually, we gravitate to the fruit, and actually avoid those desserts.

Of course there are going to be times when we do have dessert. If we are making healthy choices 95% of the time, then this is not going to be the end of the world. We will enjoy the dessert and then go back to our usual routine. It is important however, to make those healthy choices a part of our lives. "Healthy by choice, not by chance," has been our motto. With only a week left of the CHIP program, I have to rely on myself to make these decisions and start living a new and different way. Luckily I have others in the CHIP program to help me along the way.

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES (part 6)

The CHIP program is coming to an end. Eight weeks of incredible food and information have gone quickly. Although this will free up my schedule a bit, I will miss the gatherings, the accountability, and the inspiration. Taking time to think about and discuss how I live my life is not something I have done on a regular basis prior to CHIP. Would I take this program again? Definitely! Would I recommend it to others? Absolutely! Did I lose all of the weight I wanted to lose? Not yet, but I am making progress in a safe way: 1-2 lbs/wk! Is my life different because of CHIP?

Yes. I have learned so much. When I finish my homework that Fred gently reminds us to complete, then I will learn even more. I have accepted the fact I have to take responsibility for my health. This means paying attention to what I eat and making regular exercise a part of my life. In theory, that sounds pretty easy. But, putting it into practice has been a journey. I have had to learn how to cook differently, shop differently, read labels differently, and order differently. I have to plan when and how I will fit exercise into my day. Though not perfect, I am definitely getting better.

I admit I have complained, a little, about some things, like giving up my caffeine. No, I haven't completely done that, but I have certainly cut back. I also admit that I am not a big fan of seven-grain cereal. Yes, it is good for me, and I do sometimes eat it for breakfast, but it is a bit on the bland side. That being said, I have seen some good results. I will make an extra effort to continue practicing what I have learned. Even more importantly, however, is the fact that I am taking proactive steps now to avoid the potential side effects of not taking care of myself.

I read on the front page of this morning's *Sacramento Bee* that 50% of the adults in the United States have high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes. That number is staggering! I really do not want to be in the half of American adults that has to deal with these issues. I don't like to take medicine, and I really don't like needles. It's probably a good thing to avoid health issues that would require either of these. Especially the needles. I hate needles and cannot fathom what it would be like to have to deal with them on a regular basis!

Thursday will be our second *HeartScreen* for CHIP. Will I see my numbers improved from my first *HeartScreen* eight weeks ago? I started my cholesterol with a 174. That's actually quite good. Could this program improve it further to get closer to the magical ideal of 160 mg% commonly found in countries where it's difficult to find heart disease? This would be a good thing because I want to live a long time with good health and happiness.

The steps I am taking now will give me a much better chance of doing exactly that. Some of the people in our videos have done incredible things after graduating from CHIP, one elderly woman took to mountain climbing. Another graduate at the age of 67 rode across Canada on his bicycle. These were people who had previously been in poor health. Now they live incredibly full and healthy lives, doing things that the average person wouldn't even consider. Does this inspire me to set goals I would not have considered before? Yes! What if I ran in a 5K? I know I could do that. Maybe I will start there, and then see if I can push further. With Stephanie, the fitness instructor at my gym, pushing me, maybe I could run a 10K! Don't tell her I said that, because she will make sure it happens, and there will be pain and suffering involved.

In the last video sessions Dr. Diehl has also encouraged us to think beyond our physical health. He asked us to think about whether we were becoming better at loving others. What good is improved health if we are not happy in the rest of our lives? Loving others and taking time to think about their needs will improve our emotional outlook and health. Dr. Diehl also discussed how important it is to be able to forgive, others and ourselves. Harboring bitterness and hatred is not the way to live a healthy or happy life. We need relationships with others in order to live life to the fullest. These relationships invigorate our lives and inspire us to be the kind of people we strive to be.

CHIPPING AWAY AT WESTERN KILLER DISEASES (part 7)

Graduation - This was not your typical church potluck! It was a potluck, and it was held at a church, but that is where the similarities ended. The tables were absolutely beautiful, loaded with some of the most colorful food I have ever seen. All of the food was CHIP approved, so I could eat, as much I wanted, without the usual guilt that accompanies these functions. The tables were elegantly set with flowers, cloth napkins and fine china. This was a feast as much for the eyes as for the stomach. Knots of people were gathered throughout, chatting happily like the friends they had become. I proudly place my apple and bell pepper salad on the buffet and head off to my table.

I scan the crowd, looking for my tablemates and am shocked to see Dr. Diehl, himself smiling and greeting my fellow CHIP participants. For weeks we have watched his videos. His kind and compassionate exhortations to live and be the people we were intended to be have been a staple of the CHIP program. He has educated us on the benefits of changing the way we eat and live. In many ways he has been almost larger than life to us, the expert and founder of CHIP. I can't believe that he is here, chatting away and congratulating us on our completion of the program. With over three hundred programs in the United States, he has come all the way to Paradise to wish us well and encourage us as we make the transition to living the program without the weekly meetings and accountability.

It is an amazing night. We have a fabulous speaker, Mr. Harold Burden, who has been a part of the CHIP program from its inception. He pokes gentle fun at Dr. Diehl, and makes us all laugh. In addition he encourages us to stay the course and continue on with our new and improved lifestyles. There are skits which help us to see the right and wrong ways to shop. We are all laughing and I am thoroughly enjoying myself until I realize that it almost my turn to speak. Yes, for reasons I do not quite understand, I was asked to speak as well. I warned Fred that I am much better behind a keyboard than a microphone. He didn't buy it, however, and saved a spot for me in the program. I am sure that I forgot half of what I was going to say, but hopefully I was able to impress upon my fellow CHIP participants how incredibly impressive it is that we got to this point in the program. Just deciding to participate was a big step for most of us. It required a time commitment for a two-month period. We had to challenge many of our beliefs about the way we eat and how to live. Many of the participants have lost a substantial amount of weight. I know how difficult it is to do this, especially in our frenzied fast-food world. Others of us have become dedicated to exercising, regularly. This is not easy either, as there are always many other things in this world vying for our attention and time. I have found that getting up early and working out before I used to even get out of bed has worked especially well for me. This is a real change for me. A few months ago I would not have entertained the idea of a 5:30am workout!

As the evening winds down, we are given our results. I listen blithely as Fred explains the reasons some of us may not see the results we were hoping to see. I am not paying real close attention, as I KNOW my results will be outstanding. I have successfully avoided meat and dairy for the last two months. I am sure that I will have dramatic results! Did I mention that I am a bit competitive? We line up to receive our certificates and the manila envelopes which contain the magic numbers. I smile, shakes hands and hurry to my table, eager to see what is inside the envelope. I know I feel better, have definitely lost some weight, and dropped a size. I peer inside and am shocked. My numbers are not what I had hoped they would be! Did I mention that I was competitive? I am frustrated and a bit disappointed. I smile and clap for those who have seen amazing results, all the time thinking what did I do wrong? No, I wasn't perfect, but the changes I made should have given me better results than I got. I try to remember what Fred had said about the reasons why this might happen. I should have paid better attention to that part of the program. I decided that this can't be right. I have been good! I should be seeing better results. I chat with Dr. Arnott and decided that I will have to do a follow up. As I get ready to leave, Dr. Diehl himself asks about how I did. I frown and explain that my results weren't what I had hoped they would be. He asks me to wait a few

minutes and personally goes over them with me. I can't believe that he would take the time to do this, especially after a long evening. He spends time discussing them with me, and letting me know exactly what each set of numbers mean. I come away feeling better, knowing that I may have to work a bit harder to see the results I would like. That may not be "fair" but I know that my new lifestyle has made me feel better than I have in years. I am enthusiastic about the way I am living and feel like I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. When it comes down to it, isn't this worth more than having perfect numbers?