

# Jonestown Family Center honored by Regional Health Council

## Shields, Jackson providing solid leadership; grant money allowing facility to offer more

Contributed Article  
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The Jonestown Family Center for Education and Wellness, under the leadership of Sister Teresa Shields, is being honored as an advocate for healthy lifestyles in Northwest Mississippi by "Get A Life's" Regional Health Council. Sister Shields and Mrs. Lady Jackson have received national recognition for their outstanding work in the fight against obesity in Mississippi.

People Magazine featured the inspiring life story of Mrs. Lady, and the example she is leading in the small town of Jonestown in its August issue.

Jonestown Family Center began its work to prevent obesity in 2006 receiving a grant from the Catholic Extension Society and donations from friends around the country to set up an exercise facility. Once the equipment was in place, they opened the doors to the community to come and work out for a very nominal yearly fee. Three churches in Jonestown have joined the fitness club so that all church members may come and work out at any time.

Sister Shields soon saw,

besides healthy lifestyle changes, changes in eating patterns would have to be made in order to reduce obesity and diabetes. Through a partnership with the Mississippi State University Coahoma County Extension Service, Sister Shields and her staff worked to bring "Mississippi In Motion", a 12-week program focusing on encouraging healthy eating and increased physical activity, to the community.

Volunteer speakers from the community encouraged the participants to learn healthier ways of eating and exercising. Jackson was one of the participants who took the information presented to her to heart and began making positive changes in not only herself, but her entire family.

"Taking control of what you eat and not letting it control you is one of the most important steps you can take to get healthy. And walking doesn't cost a thing," Jackson said. Their work has continued since the first program in 2010.

"It has been such an inspiration to me to see how many parents are working to get in shape and cook in a more nutritious way so they can



SHIELDS



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TROY CATCHINGS/The Clarksdale Press Register

Standing from left to right: Williams Holley, Lady Jackson, Bessie Hall, Sister Teresa Shields, Margaret Johnson, Rotanza Thompson, Shirley Johnson, Janet Walker, Arell Jackson, Micheal Herron, Dessie Hart, Ruby Johnson, Zadie Washington, Sister Marilyn, Pearlina Johnson, and Tamela Veasle. Seated: Shella Foster Herron, Gertude Coleman, Carolyn Brown, Mildred Joiner, Bobbie Griffin, and Miriam Holmes.

help their children grow up to be healthy," says Sister Shields.

Jonestown has several walking groups who faithfully walk the Jonestown track every day. Others meet regularly at the Fitness and Health Club to work out together. Sister Shields continues to plan educational programs about physical activity and nutrition through partnerships Aaron E. Henry Community Center.

The Family Center recently received a grant from the Adrian Dominican Sisters to provide Jonestown in Motion classes for nine months of the

year. Through this grant, Aaron E. Henry Community Center provides a fitness instructor who helps the participants get in shape twice a week.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of MS Foundation also recently gave a grant to build 20 Fit-Trail outdoor exercise stations by the walking track, as well as to purchase several more treadmills and elliptical machines for the Fitness Club. "We want to invite everyone in Jonestown to join Jonestown in Motion and the Fitness and Health Club so our citizens can be a model of healthy living in

Coahoma County and Mississippi," remarks Sister Shields.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to present these fine ladies with the Regional Health Council Health Champion Award. I have worked side by side these ladies and have seen the excitement and positive change they have sparked in Jonestown. Change does not have to take place in large cities. All it takes is the heart and determination of someone like these two!" comments Maci Flautt, the Regional Health Council Coordinator.