



Sheila Dixon

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**Mayor Dixon Challenges City Businesses to Become “Fit-Friendly”
as Health Department Qualifies for American Heart Association Honor**

Baltimore, MD (April 9, 2008) –Mayor Sheila Dixon joined Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Sharfstein today to award the Baltimore City Health Department the “Fit Friendly” designation from the American Heart Association. Mayor Dixon also challenged city businesses to meet the example of the Health Department by promoting fitness and good nutrition in the workplace.

“The American Heart Association is excited about recognizing employers who champion the health of their employees and work to create a culture of physical activity in the workplace,” said Sue Manning, vice president of the Mid-Atlantic Region for the American Heart Association. “Congratulations to the Health Department on this national accomplishment.”

Fewer than 30 organizations throughout Maryland have received this honor. To become “fit friendly,” businesses or organizations must demonstrate a commitment to key components of supporting a wellness culture for their employees, including increasing physical activity and promoting healthy foods.

Since July 2007, the Health Department has:

- assigned a wellness coordinator, Dr. Megan Coylewright
- instituted walking programs at its central location and several branches;
- promoted use of the stairs;
- and designed weekly emails encouraging employees to exercise and choose healthy foods.

A monthly healthy potluck lunch, active promotion of citywide employee initiatives, and educational seminars on heart health were also initiated.

“Poor diet and lack of exercise contribute to illness and death in Baltimore and around the country,” said Dr. Sharfstein. “Since adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work, the office must be part of the solution.”

Mayor Sheila Dixon added, “I challenge all Baltimore City organizations to contact the Heart Association and start down the path to becoming ‘fit friendly.’ You can not only improve the quality of life for your employees, but also boost productivity and attendance in your workplace. It’s truly a win-win situation.”

More information is available at www.americanheart.org

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