U.S. Surgeon General commends Adventist focus on holistic well-being
Nation needs shift from ‘disease and illness to wellness and prevention,’ Benjamin says

First Adventist fundraising handbook to guide church building projects
Historic ministry to schools, hospitals now available for local congregations

ADRA Thailand vocational training lends refugees new future
Project is path to self-sufficiency; One refugee opens home hair salon

U.S. Surgeon General commends Adventist focus on holistic well-being
In a show of solidarity with hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist health professionals, health ministry leaders and pastors from North America this week, United States Surgeon General Regina Benjamin advocated a “holistic approach” to well-being.

“If we really want to change and reform healthcare in this country, we need to prevent people from getting sick in the first place,” Benjamin said during her January 28 keynote address at the North American Division’s Health Summit in Orlando.

Benjamin, who helms the National Prevention Council established through U.S. President Barack Obama’s health reform act, said the administration’s vision is to change the nation’s healthcare system “from a focus on disease and illness to a focus on wellness and prevention.”

“Health does not occur in the doctor’s office or hospital alone,” Benjamin said. “Health occurs where we live, where we learn, where we work, where we play and where we pray.”

The surgeon general commended the Adventist Church’s ability to marshal widespread support and participation among its members. She noted the similarities between the church’s InStep for Life program and U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! campaign, a national initiative to fight the epidemic of childhood obesity. With InStep for Life’s added element of faith, the program has “inspired congregations and communities nationwide,” Benjamin said.

“I continue to be impressed by the innovative thinking that’s going on in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to make health something you live, and not just something you hope for,” she said.

The denomination is among some 50 other faith and community organizations that pledged in 2010 to support Let’s Move! Last year, Adventists at hundreds of churches, schools and hospitals nationwide participated in Let’s Move! Day by logging steps toward a goal of one million collective miles of physical activity.

Church members were able to double that goal and reach two million miles in 2011, said Katia Reinhart, director of Health Ministries for the North American Division. Adventists in North America also planted more than 100 new vegetable gardens and farmers markets last year. For low-income families who struggle to feed their children over the summer months, church members also helped establish feeding sites at Vacation Bible Schools and other church events.

The Adventist Church in North America will in 2012 continue to focus on increasing physical activity among Adventists and community members and improving access to affordable healthy foods.
Reinhart said.

“It is our hope that every Adventist church will become a center for health in the community by using our resources to motivate people to experience a full abundant life and by improving the health and well-being of children, families and communities across North America,” she said.

With obesity rates doubling in adults and more than tripling in children since 1980, the need to raise awareness is more urgent than ever, health professionals said. Research indicates that more than 20 million U.S. children under the age of five are now overweight.

Obesity is often the “underlying cause” of heart disease, cancer and hypertension, and is the “number one risk factor” for Type 2 Diabetes, said Dr. Albert Reece, dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Maryland.

“We are now number one in the world with regard to obesity,” Reece said. “The United States wishes to be and likes to be number one in everything, but this is not one area that we can be proud of.”

Adventist world church President Ted N.C. Wilson, who holds a master's degree in public health from the church's Loma Linda University, commended health summit organizers for bringing a spiritual perspective to health and well-being.

“These kinds of events and those that focus on the healthful way of living that points us to the Master Physician are vitally important for God's church,” Wilson said.

The North America Division Health Summit runs through February 5.

First Adventist fundraising handbook to guide church building projects
A local congregation decides to build a church fellowship hall, but doesn’t secure adequate funding beforehand, assuming “the money will come once we get going.” It’s a familiar scenario, and one Seventh-day Adventist philanthropy experts are hoping a new fundraising guide will help local church leaders avoid.

“If you believe the Lord will bless later for the money to come, you can also believe the Lord will bless right now and bring it,” said Nikolaus Satelmajer, who wrote and edited “Successful Fundraising: A Guide for Local Churches” with Lilya Wagner, director of the church’s Philanthropic Service for Institutions (PSI).

As its name implies, the department has historically served the fundraising needs of the church’s educational and healthcare institutions. But today, PSI is fielding more and more requests from local congregations. As multi-million dollar building and capital projects become routine, fundraising is an increasingly complex endeavor, Satelmajer said.

“While there are countless how-to volumes, I wanted something customized for Adventist campaigns and projects,” Wagner said. “It was challenging but also satisfying to take the best experiences and practices in my field and adapt them to the needs of [Adventist] leaders.”

“Successful Fundraising: A Guide for Local Churches” (AdventSource) is the first such handbook written and edited by Adventist philanthropy leaders.

The handbook will serve as a springboard to any fundraising project, with advice and formulas on advance planning, structuring a capital campaign, stewardship principles and avoiding debt fatigue, Satelmajer said.

While the handbook specifically targets a North American audience, its principles will apply worldwide, he said. One chapter explores Ellen G. White’s approach to fundraising. The Adventist Church co-founder was a key figure in fundraising for many of the early church’s healthcare and educational institutions. A study of her methods indicates that she believed in asking for donations, especially from those she knew well and from potential donors outside of church membership.

“You have to get to know the person, and you have to present them with a case -- Here’s what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. It’s not enough to say, ‘We’re building a new church, will you give us money?’” he said.

Another key principle is getting the entire church behind a project before moving forward, Satelmajer
said. With church-wide support, a building project can unify a congregation around a single goal, but when the majority of members are reluctant, a project “can really damage the relationships in the church,” he said.

“We spend quite a bit of time developing this idea -- How do you make it a church project, and not just a project of three or four enthusiastic people who commit $100,000 and say the other million will surely come,” Satelmajer said.

“Successful Fundraising: A Guide for Local Churches” is available through AdventSource as a first resources for local pastors and lay leaders. PSI is encouraging those who purchase the handbook to contact the department for further support, including -- in some cases -- a site visit.

“PSI can answer some questions and provide some advice over the phone and will do their best to send someone qualified to work with the congregations,” Wagner said.

Refugees striving to make ends meet in Thailand are finding new skills training and employment opportunities, thanks to an Adventist Development and Relief Agency project in the country.

When Na Aye Yin and her family fled her home country of Myanmar to a refugee camp in Thailand, they were disappointed to learn that they would not benefit from a Thai government program that assists refugees.

Meanwhile, Na Aye Yin heard about an ADRA project called ‘Vocational Training for Refugees from Myanmar’ that offered classes in vocational skills to refugee camp residents. Classes included sewing, welding, elderly and childcare, basic auto mechanics, cooking and hair styling.

After completing the initial class in hair styling, Na Aye Yin enrolled for further study through training conducted by the Thai Vocational College, which partners with ADRA Thailand.

Equipped with new skills, Na Aye Yin opened a hair salon in her bamboo house. The success of her fledgling business convinced her husband to study hair styling as well.

Not only have the couple become self-sufficient through their shop, they are working together to
provide free services for unemployed refugees in the community.

“We want to help others. It gives us greater happiness in our hearts,” said Na Aye Yin.

Through ADRA vocational training, refugees like Na Aye Yin become productive, contributing members of society, ADRA Thailand officials said.

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**ANN staff:** Williams Costa Jr., director; Ansel Oliver, assistant director; Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial coordinator. Portuguese translations by Azenilto Brito, Spanish translations by Marcos Paseggi and French translations by Wenda Ozone-Mourandee.