



## Investing in Nutrition and Fitness Education for Women

December 30, 2010

Dear Friends,

For the last two years I have pursued one of my dreams, and today I am thrilled to share with you the results.

Last January, 12 women in Brooklyn took those first steps to learn how to incorporate healthy living habits into their lives. They embarked on an experimental journey with me—my idea was untested—and together we worked out the kinks and shared thoughts about how to make the best possible healthy living program. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, after meeting each Saturday for 24 weeks, they graduated from the program lighter, happier, and more informed.

The program they completed is my dream—***Start Your Engine***.

***Start Your Engine*** is a comprehensive nutrition and fitness education program for women who are overweight or at risk for diet-related illnesses. The mission of the program is to prevent obesity by inspiring women to achieve a healthy lifestyle through education and practice in time management, nutrition, fitness, and stress management.

Dieting and staying in shape is nothing new. We have all faced the challenges of trying to eat right and find the time to exercise. ***Start Your Engine*** is the culmination of my own healthy living journey. I was lucky to have the time and resources to work with a nutritionist and a personal trainer. My experience was so wonderful; I wanted to share it with as many people as possible. As I researched healthy living and obesity, I was taken aback. The statistics are alarming.

*Nearly two-thirds of American adults are overweight, but the poorest among us are **twice** as likely to be obese.*

Of course, I knew there were lots and lots of weight-loss programs already on the market. But despite all these great efforts, our collective waistlines continue to grow, not shrink. So I looked at programs that work for people, and I thought about what worked for me. I realized that the combination of interventions—nutrition, time and stress management, and exercise—is what made the difference. I had gone through my own personal version of the television show *The Biggest Loser*, but I did it in real life and in real time. And that's what ***Start Your Engine*** brought to the 12 pilot participants in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

*Start Your Engine is a healthy living intervention that works in real life for real people.*

One of the participants in the program is an excellent example. I'll call her Ann. For 30 years her doctor told her that she needed to lose weight and should start eating breakfast. But again and again she reverted to her old eating habits, and would eat only one healthy meal a day. With help

from the Start Your Engine team, she tried out different foods for breakfast and eventually ended up eating *more* calories than she did before the program started. After the six-month program, she had lost 47 pounds! At the age of 62, Ann proved that anyone can learn new skills and habits.

As 2011 approaches, Start Your Engine is gearing up to run up to five more cycles of the program. We are participating in the Brooklyn Partnership to Drive Down Diabetes (BP3D), which will ensure that we reach more women in need. Throughout the year we will continue reaching out to community organizations to further our efforts to teach women healthy living skills.

Our goal is to have 60 women complete the ***Start Your Engine*** program this year. Since most of our prospective participants are struggling to make ends meet, we need your help. It costs \$600 for each person to attend the full 24-week program. We have created a sliding scale fee and need to subsidize the remaining cost of the tuition.

Your gift—whether it is \$25, \$100, or you choose to sponsor the whole tuition for one woman at \$600—will make a significant impact on a woman’s life. As a start-up organization, every dollar counts. Not only will it help cover the cost of the teachers and the program materials, it will also tell the philanthropic community that you support innovative new ways to combat the obesity epidemic.

Gifts to Start Your Engine must be made through our fiscal sponsor, FJC. Although we are an independent organization, FJC provides us with the tax-exempt status required by the federal government, so that your donation is tax-deductible. To make an on-line donation using your credit card, please follow go to our website at [www.startyourenginenyc.org](http://www.startyourenginenyc.org) and click on the Donate Now button. If you prefer to write a check, please follow the instructions listed here: <http://www.startyourenginenyc.org/support.php>.

The women who participate in ***Start Your Engine*** are taking that first step to make a change in their lives. Often, they are the first person in their family standing up against poverty and limited opportunity. Your gift will help our participants break the cycle.

Thank you for your support and best wishes for a healthy and happy new year.

Regards,



Anastasia Holmes  
Director