



HEALTH

## Better fitness for families

By CHUCK HARRIS

IN THE COMING DAYS, millions of Americans will tackle the annual ritual of making New Year's resolutions. Eat better, exercise more, lose weight, quit smoking — these are among the perennial favorites. Some will succeed, some will stumble and others, come March, will join the ranks of those vowing to try again next year.

What is the secret to New Year's resolution success? Not going it alone!

So this year, the YMCA of South Hampton Roads is encouraging families to put a new twist on the old custom and make resolutions for 2008 together as a family. We have worked for more than 150 years to build strong families, and every day we see firsthand the power of a supportive community and family in achieving goals.

The need is as strong today as ever before. Families are under increasing stress and struggle to balance work, family and health, and to find supportive communities. Children struggle to develop the positive values, self-esteem and habits for a healthy, productive adulthood.

Studies confirm again and again the vital role that interaction and connectedness play in the long-term health and well-being of individual family members.

We offer the following tips for family New Year's resolutions:

- Track progress in a fun, interactive and visual way. Put resolutions in writing and display them on the refrigerator where every family member will see them regularly. Be creative; make resolution posters and charts for mapping progress.

- Celebrate with positive, healthy rewards. Honor each small success with positive, fun and healthy rewards that meet the needs of the entire family. Schedule regular check-ins, such as a monthly family dinner discussion, and celebrate your achievements, both big and small.

- Prepare for setbacks. Setbacks aren't failure; they are times to call in the troops for reinforcement. A bout with the flu might get the whole family off track for a week or two, so schedule a family meeting to get restarted.

- Work together as a team to overcome barriers. If a family member is having trouble meeting a goal, brainstorm together to develop a new strategy. For example, if mom is having trouble finding time for exercise, the kids can do the dishes a few nights a week so she can take a 30-minute walk.

For additional tips and ideas, please see [www.ymcashr.org/resolutionfor2008](http://www.ymcashr.org/resolutionfor2008).

Our best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!

**Chuck Harris** is president and CEO of YMCA of South Hampton Roads in Chesapeake.

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