

Social marketing changes with times to promote social change

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Fasten your seatbelt. Get that flu shot. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Turn off the light when you're not in the room. Save money for your retirement.

There is no limit to the behaviors and attitudes that [social marketing](#) can seek to influence. When public health, marketing and environmental science professionals from across the world gather next month for the 20th Anniversary Social Marketing in Public Health Conference, Milestones in Social Marketing: Past, Present & Future, they will discuss how the field is changing and expanding its reach to promote large-scale social change. The integration of digital technology and social media into social marketing will be part of the discussion.

Sponsored by the University of South Florida (USF Health) in collaboration with the Academy for Educational Development, the conference will be held June 11 and 12, 2010, at the Sheraton Sand Key Hotel in Clearwater Beach, FL.

"Our conference is the longest-running social marketing event in the world," said James Lindenberger, director of the Center for Social Marketing at the USF College of Public Health. "Over the last 20 years USF and its public health practitioners have built strong relationships with thousands of conference participants who continue to share what they've learned and to advance social marketing in areas like chronic disease, obesity prevention, smoking cessation, sexual health and global health."

The conference kicks off with a presentation by three early pioneers of social marketing - Philip Kotler, PhD; Alan Andreasen, PhD; and Bill Novelli. Collectively known as the "founding fathers of social marketing," they will give their perspectives on how the field has evolved internationally and in the United States.

Kotler, the S.C. Johnson & Son Distinguished Professor of International Marketing at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University, is considered one of the most influential marketing scholars in the last 30 years. Andreasen, professor and executive director of the Social Marketing Institute at Georgetown University, is a consumer behavior expert and a world leader in applying marketing to nonprofit organizations. Novelli, founder of the worldwide public relations agency Porter Novelli, was former chief executive officer of AARP and former president of the Tobacco-Free Kids Campaign.

Social marketing applies the principles and techniques of commercial marketing in an attempt to persuade a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, change or abandon a behavior to benefit themselves and society in general. Consumer-focused research and evaluation are an integral part of the social marketing process.

Carol Bryant, PhD, co-director of the Florida Prevention Research Center at the USF College of [Public Health](#), will also speak at the conference. Her recent work has focused on designing social marketing-based interventions that get children to be more physically active and eat better.

In the beginning, Bryant said, international health agencies used social marketing primarily with a maternal and child health focus -- to help reduce infant mortality, promote family planning, and prevent infectious or parasitic diseases, for example. As the discipline became more widely

practiced in the United States, its strategies were tapped by such diverse fields as environmental health, education, and finance.

"Now, you're seeing community-based social marketing to get people to recycle, conserve energy, stop feeding the bears - all sorts of environmental protection initiatives," Bryant said. "It's even used for financial planning purposes ...to convince people to save money."

Conventional marketing, which often relies heavily on mass advertising, can be effective at increasing public awareness and understanding of issues, but its success in altering social behavior is limited.

"We spend a lot of time teaching people what social marketing is not - and it's not focus groups, advertising and public service announcements," Bryant said. "It's far more complicated and powerful than that. It involves in-depth research, integrating that research into program design and sometimes changing public policy and community norms to make it easier for people to adopt the behavior and attitudes you're promoting."

Provided by University of South Florida Health

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