

DR. CARL ALLEN AND DR. TRINA WIGGINS...

Success in health and life!

The legacy of our forefathers overcoming many obstacles to attain a freedom-filled life first began with a strong will and body. The mental and physical strength to carry them through the tough times so that the realization of a better life could be possible is a mindset that is still practiced today. Dr. Carl Allen (obstetrician-gynecologist), a graduate of Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Trina Wiggins (pediatrician), a Stanford grad, are married and parents to two young boys. Their dedication to good health, both mental and physical, is the example that personifies them.

BI: As it pertains to the health for black people, what comes to mind first?

Allen: We need to exercise more and manage our diets. Traditionally, we eat a lot of fats and salt, and we don't exercise as much as we would like.

Wiggins: Yes, I agree. A lot of the chronic diseases that we see today, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, are a result of lack of exercise and poor dietary habits.

BI: How do you find the will to exercise when you are stressed and the stress causes you to be tired?

Wiggins: Ironically, exercise relieves stress and it will give you clarity in knowing how to deal with your stress.

Allen: That's true, when I get done with my daily job, I come home and exercise for an hour. I have various things in my home gym, and I spend a lot of time reading the newspaper as a form of relaxation as I ride my exercise bike.

BI: The Taste & Sounds of Soul is coming

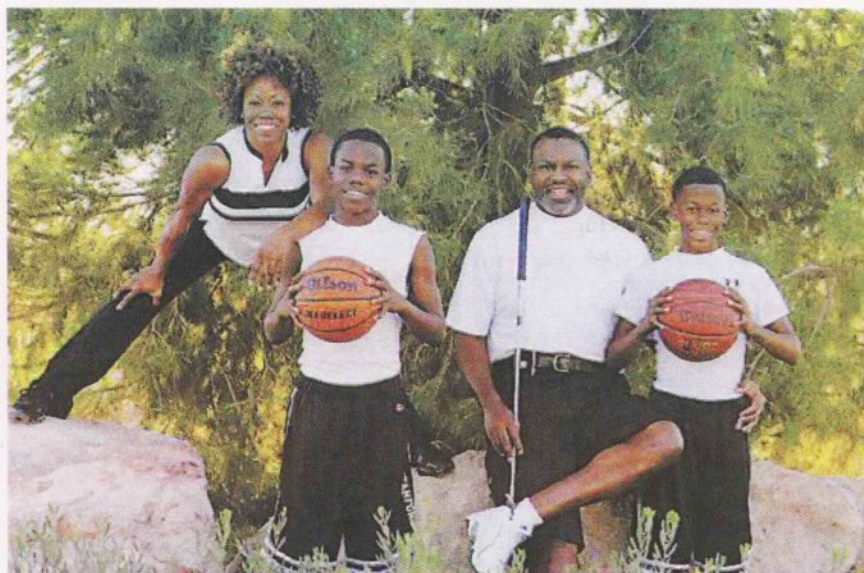
up at the end of this month. What would be your suggestions to modify the intake of some of the fatty foods we love, such as ribs and potato salad?

Wiggins: In our home, we still eat black-eyed peas, but we modify how we prepare them. I don't use the salt pork. Instead, we use turkey bacon. Our sweet potato pie is made with a whole wheat crust and as a sugar substitute, we will use Splenda. You can still have some of your traditional foods, but they can be modified for good health. Also, we eat no fried foods. All of our meats are baked. All of the chicken we eat is baked with the skin off, because it has the highest fat content in it. Salt is a big problem with our health, and Costco has a no-salt organic seasoning. We just need to know the modifications for our foods.

Allen: You can still do the ribs, but get the ribs that are lean. You have to eat ribs still in moderation. You can't have them every weekend.

BI: Can a healthy diet control diseases such as diabetes, sickle cell and high blood pressure?

Wiggins: Absolutely, diet is huge. I think people don't realize how important it is for your well being. Personally, as a society, we don't eat enough fruit and vegetables. It is well known to consume at least nine servings of fruit and vegetable a day. Most of those fruit and vegetables have vital chemicals, and those are the ingredients that help fight disease. I can tell you that when I was practicing, the most common vegetable eaten by children was the french fry. They could not tell me when they ate something green. In general, the American diet is



Dr. Trina Wiggins, Dr. Carl Allen and their sons, Marcus and Malcolm.

not good. I attribute this to a lack of fruit and vegetables in our diet.

Allen: There is also an economic association with foods that are available to you that you can afford, versus foods that are affordable. Some grocery stores located in the community might have those unhealthy foods more readily available to you than those that are good for you.

Wiggins: Wherever you shop you still have to be a wise shopper and read the labels and know the salt content, what is the saturated fat content and be able to compare and contrast. It will take some education. If people knew how to read a food label, and even more so, "Keep it simple, stupid." That is my motto. Just buy fruits and vegetables and that's basic. It has not been adulterated and there are no additives in them. Also, when you buy chicken, make sure there is no skin on it, and buy lean meats and wash them down and drain the meat so the excess fat comes off. Simple things like this will go a long way.

Allen: Be aware that some stores don't have their fruits and vegetables in the front. You have to find them in the back of the store or way off to the side.

Wiggins: Yes, that's a re-education process that we need to be aware of. We have to understand that healthy foods

do not come out of a box or out of a can. They come out of the ground. If we could go back to how our grandparents ate — they had their own gardens and planted their fruits and vegetables — we would be a lot better off.

BI: Is it true that curry and turmeric seasoning are healthy for you, and does hot sauce have any health benefit?

Wiggins: Yes, I hear that these Indian spices have a lot of health benefits. Hot sauce just has a lot of salt in it that is not good for you.

Allen: My mother is a traditional Southern black woman, born and raised in Mississippi. We changed our whole pantry with organic and healthy foods and when she came to visit. She saw that she could make the biscuits without the lard and replace ground beef in spaghetti with ground turkey. She said to me, "You know this tasted great." People can change.

Wiggins: People do things by habit. They don't want to waste money on things that may not taste good. So, if they taste something, and know it tastes good and the price is right, they will make the change. The basic thing that we have done as a family is to increase our fruits and vegetable intake every day.

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- DR. TRINA WIGGINS