

HEALTH IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

- Elaine Leavenworth, chief marketing and external affairs officer of Abbott, reflects on what we can learn from the TCS New York City Marathon runners

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., Oct. 30, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Well known for its culture, theater, and cuisine, New York is also one of the 25 healthiest cities in the United States. It's this fitness side that will be on show this weekend with the TCS New York City Marathon.

Photo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20151030/282292>

Logo - <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20150928/271488LOGO>

From elite athletes to non-athletes to people overcoming meaningful obstacles, every runner has their own personal reasons for tackling those 26.2 miles. And all of these reasons have to do – in one way or another – with living their lives more richly and fully. The key to this personal achievement is health – the power that allows these runners, and all of us, to pursue our best and most fulfilled lives.

The marathon represents all the faces of health and its many benefits – benefits that are invaluable, but often quantifiable. Healthier people positively impact our economy as well as our communities. Staying active elevates a person's general health, fitness, perseverance, and sense of personal well-being. If you surveyed marathon runners this weekend, most, if not all, would surely list these among the reasons why they ran.

We all could learn a thing or two from these marathoners. Good health does more than just get us through the day. It allows people to live happier, more productive lives. It enables us to enjoy the things we love. This can be captured in productivity measures (like GDP), as well as by our ability to spend time with our children, pursue our hobbies, or simply take a walk around the block – whatever it is that each person sees as living the best and fullest life they can. And that range is broad, fascinating and inspiring, as we're finding through a global effort to ask one million people what living a full life means to them (you can add your own views at www.LifetotheFullest.abbott).

The importance and broad benefits of health have been strongly endorsed by the White House, which recently concluded that a healthier population could slow the growth of healthcare costs by 1.5 percent – and increase U.S. GDP by 8 percent by 2030.¹ According to the Institute of Medicine, a 50 percent reduction in adult obesity would reduce U.S. healthcare spending by \$58 billion annually.²

On a personal level, consider how an active lifestyle benefits mental health. During exercise, our bodies release endorphins and serotonin.³ These chemicals boost a person's happiness while reducing daily stress. This has been shown repeatedly in multiple studies.

For example, one 2012 study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* reported on a group of individuals tracked for four years. Those who engaged in regular exercise were twice as likely to report being happy as those who remained inactive.⁴

A healthy lifestyle also significantly reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. That's because exercise combats chronic inflammation – a primary cause of heart attacks and strokes. In fact, moderate exercise and healthy eating could prevent an estimated 200,000 deaths per year.⁵

Further, exercise boosts concentration and productivity. Just 30 minutes of rigorous activity allows the brain to better resist distractions.⁶ Exercise also strengthens connections between brain cells, enhancing problem-solving capabilities.⁷

The collateral benefits of a healthy lifestyle extend to the workplace as well. Stockholm University researchers asked employees to dedicate 2.5 hours of their workweek to exercise. Despite spending less time on job tasks, employees exercising half an hour a day equaled or exceeded their previous output – an impressive gain in both productivity and health.

Regular exercise also helps fight off sickness.⁸ That means workers miss fewer days. A study published in *Health Affairs* determined that for every dollar spent on wellness programs, companies save \$2.73 through reduced absenteeism.⁹

As individuals and as a country, we must recognize the possibilities that come from taking good care of ourselves. Health benefits can be both personal and societal. At their healthiest, people have the potential to live not just longer, but better.

That's why Abbott (NYSE: ABT) became the title sponsor of the Abbott World Marathon Majors series, which consists of six of the most renowned marathons in the world, including the one in New York this weekend – to celebrate what's possible with good health. We believe that health is the foundation for all we can enjoy and achieve in life – and we want to inspire people to think about what matters most to them and motivate them to

live healthier lives.

The marathoners gathering in New York are running to achieve personal goals, to better their own health, and to improve the lives of the people around them. This is their way of living fully – what's yours?

- 1 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cea/TheEconomicCaseforHealthCareReform/>
- 2 <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/magazine/public-health-economy-election/>
- 3 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennifercohen/2012/05/08/6-ways-exercise-makes-you-smarter/>
- 4 <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/content/176/12/1095.long>
- 5 <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/04/07/cardiovascular-disease-preventable.aspx>
- 6 <http://www.karenpostal.com/exercise-think-better/>
- 7 <http://www.karenpostal.com/exercise-think-better/>
- 8 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/09/110906121011.htm>
- 9 <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/2/304.full>

SOURCE Abbott

Additional assets available online:

