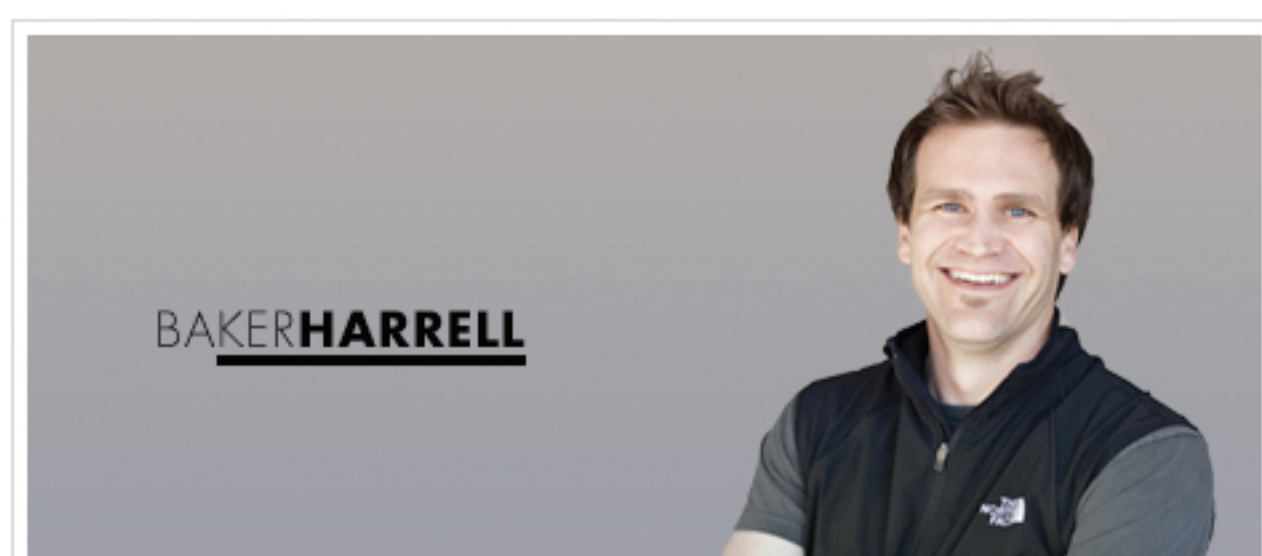


Faces of Fitness Philanthropy



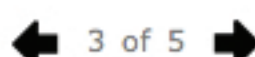
by Drex Earle
Editor-in-Chief



BAKER HARRELL

Baker Harrell, Active Life Movement (ALM)

Photo by: Brian Fitzsimmons



BAKER HARRELL
ACTIVE Life Movement (ALM)

Research tells us that if current trends continue over the next 20 years, almost 90 percent of our adult population will be overweight or obese. No doubt a staggering, daunting and frightening statistic. But what's more troubling is the seeming lack of urgency many Americans have about changing course. When you consider the health care crisis we're already facing and that many experts admit we're now at a point of no return, it's abundantly clear that something must change.

Thankfully, there are a number of brave individuals who have made it their life's work to attack this obesity problem head-on, pushing everyday to create a healthier future for us all. Baker Harrell, founder and executive director of The ACTIVE Life Movement, is one of those courageous people.

Through the organization he founded back in 2004, Harrell has been working to spark and organize a national social ethos for healthy living. A doctoral candidate at the University of Texas at Austin who specializes in new media, health marketing and social movements, Harrell and his team have been focused on a bold, innovative and revolutionary approach to behavior change and lifestyle modification. The best way to characterize it is simply as a "movement."

By building a community of change agents, and connecting them with resources and opportunities to create and advocate for active lifestyle change, ACTIVE Life Movement is building the first-of-its kind, social movement for health.

"Our social movement model is totally unique in our field," Harrell says, "and we believe it's the only approach that hasn't been adequately applied to the crisis. Our model enlists, equips and unites people and places to demand and create a healthier future for their friends, families, communities and the country. To us, the best solution is healthy culture change — in essence, a new societal standard as it relates to overall health and fitness."

Clearly, the operative word in the ACTIVE Life Movement is "active," an intentionally broad term designed to put power back in the hands of regular people. Broken into three dimensions — "move" (exercise), "fuel" (nutrition/healthy eating) and "honor" (community building) — it's essentially a growing ecosystem of activities, relationships and information, revolving around a single mission — helping people become more active.

Through ACTIVE Life events, block parties, programs and festivals, the organization reaches individuals, families, schools and businesses, both large and small. By signing up on the ACTIVE Life Movement Web site (activelifemovement.org), anyone can become a member of the movement and gain access to a wealth of information on active events and resources.

In the Community Challenge, high school students partner with local business professionals to create "squads" which work collaboratively, over the course of a school year, to improve the health of their social networks and create a project that will improve the health of their community. Those students who do well in the program are eligible to win college scholarships.

ACTIVE Life's Make the Movement Day on May 5th is a community-wide push for people to get active on a single day. They can log and track their own active "moments" online (at makethemovementday.org), join other activities that interest them and share their experiences across their social network. The goal is to have a "moment" collective on one day which in turn becomes a movement.

"We love calling Austin our home because of its diverse community and its entrepreneurial and philanthropic nature," Harrell explains. "We pilot and test many of our efforts in Central Texas before scaling them across the nation. Although we'll serve more than 600,000 Texans this year, I imagine many of your readers have never heard of us."

With a much-needed, ground-breaking approach to attacking the obesity problem and the growing support of his ACTIVE Life Movement, Harrell is certainly on his way to changing that.

More about Baker:

- Harrell's father is a serial entrepreneur and his mother has worked for and managed a small non-profit in his hometown since he was very young.
- He experienced the transformative power of a healthy lifestyle firsthand. As an overweight child, Harrell suffered daily ridicule and low self-esteem, but the adoption of an exercise regimen and healthy diet in elementary school changed his life.
- Harrell founded Youth InterACTIVE in 2004, which has evolved its scope, reach and brand to become the ACTIVE Life Movement.

Q&A:

What do you do to stay in shape?

I run or cycle most days of the week and work out with my team every Monday morning at Planet Fitness—love that place!

How healthy is your diet?

I am a pretty conscious eater—I primarily eat fish or poultry and lots of fruits and vegetables. And I drink loads of water.

Get Involved:

{1} Participate in our upcoming Make the Movement Day initiative online (makethemovementday.org) by creating your own "Moments" of health and sharing those Moments with their friends and co-workers. We're hoping Austinites will help us reach our goal of 30,000 healthy "Moments!"

{2} Promote our free Partner System tool to schools, childcare centers and community organizations in their surrounding communities. This free tool is available through our website: activelifemovement.org.

{3} Attend or volunteer at our free, community-wide ALM Festival on Saturday, May 8th, at The Burger Center. We produce this event each year in conjunction with AISD and it's one of Texas' largest health-oriented events for families and youth. For all the details, please visit almfestival.org.

Visit the web site: activelifemovement.org