The University of Pittsburgh Asthma Institute participated in the WPXI Skylight Media days at Heinz Field on Monday, July 11th. This all day event featured over 500 high school student athletes, coaches and cheerleaders. The students had the opportunity to visit booths of various sponsors including the University of Pittsburgh Asthma Institute.

The AI brought along a staff of physicians, research coordinators, and a recruiter to offer free breathing tests and asthma educational material. Our neighbors, the U.S Marines, stopped by our booth to gather information on asthma and to speak with Dr. Wenzel.

At every event the AI brings a portable Spirometry machine. This allows us to get a nearly perfect reading of how your lungs are functioning and allows the doctor onsite to see if you have any constriction in your airways. The test takes less than 5 minutes and participants can meet with a doctor right after the test.

The Asthma Institute is now also providing free services to churches throughout the Pittsburgh area. We participated in the Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church blood drive and health fair on August 6th, 2011 with a great turnout!

Keep on the lookout at www.asthmainstitute.pitt.edu for more upcoming events. We would love to see you next time!

If you are interested in having the Asthma Institute come to your church, health fair, or community event, please contact us at 412-647-9955 or asthmainstitute@upmc.edu.

Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine
The UPMC Asthma Institute Support Group is up and running. Our meetings are taking place via conference call and are held the third Monday of each month, from 6 - 7 pm. This format has enabled participants to join in from all over North America.

The group addresses a range of issues regarding the treatment of—and challenges of living with—asthma. It is facilitated by Sally Wenzel, MD, Director of UPMC's Asthma Institute, and Deborah Gillman, PhD, Clinical Psychologist with the Institute. Guest experts may participate as well.

Participants during July’s meeting described:

- challenges of managing their illness
- maintaining close relationships with spouses, parents, and other family members
- disappointments of not being able to attend their children’s special events, family funerals, etc. due to weather that would cause their asthma to worsen
- being unable to work or contribute financially to the family
- adult-onset asthma now holds them back from an active lifestyle

Interestingly, several participants described acting as if they are in good health, to keep up with the people around them and hide their symptoms. Why? To prevent their families from worrying. Others agreed that once family members become alarmed, family life can become overwhelmed with too much worry. As a result, these participants with severe asthma keep their difficulties to themselves. The downside of this, however, is that as stress and fatigue increase, so does the risk of exacerbation. We discussed the importance of having a support group such as this one or some contact with others who have a true understanding of how it feels to live with severe asthma.

We hope participants in this group will continue to use it as a resource for sharing their experiences and suggestions, to keep from feeling too alone with their illness, and to explore new ways of coping with asthma.

To join the group or receive more information please send an email to gillmanda@upmc.edu or call Dr. Gillman at 412-864-2404.