

Island still in damage-assessment phase

after the worst hurricane in

recent history

sweeps the area

off its feet.

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## Investors win long-term bets on pair of stocks

Investors who take the long view have been sorely tested by stock market gyrations in the past 12 months.

Buying and holding shares in two Houston companies would have paid off handsomely, ac-

**Moving in**  
Gallery Furniture is opening a new concept store in the Galleria area.

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## FACE TO FACE WITH...

### Jonathan Lack Executive director Houston Wellness Association



Jonathan Lack was selected by Mayor Bill White in 2005 to help get Houston back into shape after the city was named the "Fattest City in America" by *Men's Fitness* magazine.

Lack served on the executive committee of the Mayor's Wellness Council to lead the City's "Get Moving Houston" initiative and went on to become executive director of the nonprofit Houston Wellness Association, a membership-based collaborative effort to advance wellness in the Houston area.

After receiving a master of business administration degree from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, Lack spent more than 16 years in the banking, financial, electronic commerce, health care, information services and manufacturing sectors before taking on his present role.

Lack was interviewed by Casey Wooten.

**Q** Why did you leave the private sector to become the executive director of the Houston Wellness Association?

**A** I thought my entrepreneurial and civic experience as well as my healthy lifestyle would enable me to have a real impact on a crisis that could destroy our way of life as we know it. I am a strategic planner and marketing professional who has had a lot of experience in getting companies and civic projects off the ground. I also like challenges. I see a real need for a viable wellness sector to help overcome the health care crisis our community is facing. Being part of this movement that the founders of the Mayor's Wellness Council created was a unique opportunity to have a real social impact on a city and country that I am lucky to be a part of.

**Q** What were some of the main factors in Houston's previous ranking as "fattest city"?

**A** Houston is the fourth-largest city in the country with a large uninsured work force. We are a city made up of large minority populations with huge health disparities. Additionally, the entire health care system's focus has been on interventional treatment with little emphasis on prevention.

**Q** What are some of the key issues Houston needs to address to solve this problem? Is there any definitive plan to steer Houstonians back toward a healthy lifestyle?

**A** Houston's business community needs to make wellness a top priority to stay competitive. Given the rising cost of health insurance, companies will not want to relocate to or stay in a region that is perceived to have an unhealthy work force. Having a healthier work force is good for business because it means you have a more productive and thus competitive work force. The business community needs to support the wellness sector which will not only keep the city healthy, but will also create jobs and new economic opportunities.

We also need to put a high emphasis on education. Too many residents in

our community simply have not been taught how to take care of their health. Personal responsibility for one's own body has to be taught and encouraged in a culture that is too quick to blame others first and too indifferent to help others who are different than themselves.

Lastly, the city, the county and residential developers must do their part in creating a community environment in which it is safe as well as practical to be outside exercising. If there are no sidewalks in a neighborhood how can a young child ride his/her bike to the local park. If the park is not safe why would their parent allow them to go in the first place? We should not confuse our community's preference for no-zoning laws with no community planning.

**Q** What have been some of the organization's biggest accomplishments?

**A** After 18 months of existence we have more than 400 business members from large corporations, small businesses and independent wellness practitioners. We are hosting our second annual Worksite Wellness Conference in conjunction with our Inaugural Obesity Summit at Minute Maid Park on Nov. 13 and 14 targeting the business, education and medical professional communities. We are also changing the mindset of our business, civic and political leaders that we are going to have to work collaboratively to have any chance of overcoming our health care crisis.

**Q** What would you like to see happen over the next five years?

**A** The Houston Wellness Association would like Houston to be the model of a healthy city for the rest of the country and the world. We would like to see every business in Houston, large and small, have a worksite wellness program for its employees to enhance competitiveness in the market place. We will also have a wellness sector that not only has a positive impact on the health of our community but also a positive economic impact on our local and regional economy. ■