

Healthy Active Arkansas Case Study: North Little Rock Health Initiatives



CASE STUDY

November 2017

Obesity causes or exacerbates numerous chronic diseases and conditions that can lead to death, including diabetes and hypertension. In an effort to address the obesity epidemic in Arkansas—which affects more than one-third of adults in our state—the governor-led Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) initiative provides a 10-year framework with phased goals to increase the percentage of Arkansans who are at a healthy weight. The HAA plan is comprised of nine priority areas in which individuals and communities can take action to encourage and enable healthier lifestyles. Supported by funding from the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) has convened five learning-network events across the state and has engaged, recruited, and activated a network of local champions to assist in meeting these goals. This case study is part of a series of success stories highlighting action-plan progress from the HAA learning network. Visit achi.net for more resources, including additional case studies and a structured tool to create your own action plan for your community.

HEALTHY ACTIVE ARKANSAS STATEWIDE LEARNING NETWORK

Nearly 250 city and county officials, hospital executives, superintendents, college administrators, community advocates, and others have joined the Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) network and have committed to changing norms and behaviors with respect to nutrition and physical activity where they live, work, and play. During five regional meetings throughout the state, network members generated more than 100 action plans identifying strategies, barriers, and partners to create change in at least one of the nine priority areas.

The fourth of ACHI's five learning network meetings, in Little Rock, highlighted the City of North Little Rock, which has adopted a comprehensive approach to address the health and well-being of both employees and community members through its Fit2Live program. The priority areas addressed by the program include physical and built environment (Priority Area 1), nutritional standards in schools—early child care through college (Priority Area 3), physical education and activity in schools—early child care through college (Priority Area 4), healthy worksites (Priority Area 5), and access to healthy foods (Priority Area 6).

NORTH LITTLE ROCK FIT2LIVE INITIATIVE

In 2009, the Fit2Live initiative created a culture of change to address the obesity epidemic and make the healthy choice the easy choice. To address health insurance premiums, medications, and sick time, the City of North Little Rock established three programs including wellness physicals, fitness center reimbursement and health fairs. North Little Rock employees who meet the requirement for wellness physical can earn up to \$100. The city reimburses employees up to \$10 a month for gym memberships when they attend at least five times in a month and conducts annual employee and family health fairs.



For the community, North Little Rock established over 20 community gardens that allow residents to grow their own fruits and vegetables and invested in the built environment to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety. The implementation of these activities and programs ensures the city addresses the culture of change necessary to combat the obesity epidemic and make the healthy choice the easy choice. To meet these objectives, the Fit2Live initiative developed the following partnerships:

Fit2Live Community Garden at Iris Park



- Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention - *Improve the health of all Arkansas communities by increasing physical activity and healthy eating to reduce and prevent obesity.*
- Arkansas GardenCorps - *Strengthen community resources, volunteerism and national service in Arkansas.*
- University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, Pulaski County - *Strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to best practices.*

ACHI is a nonpartisan, independent, health policy center that serves as a catalyst to improve the health of Arkansans.

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- Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance - *Reduce hunger and improve access to nutritious food by providing tools and resources, empowerment, advocacy, education and research.*
- Plantopia - *Provide the highest quality materials and best service in the industry by maintaining the highest level of honesty and integrity.*
- American Composting - *Serve as the dominant organics recycler in the state of Arkansas.*

NORTH LITTLE ROCK FIT2LIVE DIRECTOR

In his role as director of Fit2Live and special assistant to the North Little Rock mayor, Isaac Henry's tasks are to enhance the Fit2Live program and further advance the health status of NLR's employees and citizens. Henry believes that increasing the awareness of obesity and other preventable diseases and demonstrating impact may diminish the budgetary concerns of city leaders and citizens.

"The obesity epidemic is plaguing our state, and I believe in a collective partnership between the business, government, private and community sectors to solve this problem." — Isaac Henry

NORTH LITTLE ROCK FIT2LIVE SUCCESSES

The North Little Rock Fit2Live program's prominent successes include:

- Two leadership awards from the Arkansas Governor's Council on Fitness (2013)
- \$33,000 awarded for community gardens (2009-2017)
 - 50,000 volunteer hours for all community gardens
- Employee wellness program
 - 90 employees earned gift cards for meeting requirements (2016)
 - More than 90 employees met wellness requirements with three months left (2017)
 - Employee and family success stories captured (2017)
 - Media format to showcase success stories to be determined

NORTH LITTLE ROCK NEXT STEPS

North Little Rock hopes to achieve 100-percent participation in its employee wellness program, expects to fund six new community gardens, and plans to collaborate with the city's school district to fund school-based gardens. Henry anticipates continued documentation of impact will ensure long-term sustainability of Fit2Live efforts.

REFERENCES

- Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
- Learn more about the North Little Rock Fit2Live: <http://www.nlr.ar.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=96203>
- Learn more about Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention: <http://arkansasobesity.org/>
- Learn more about Arkansas GardenCorps: <http://arkansasgardencorps.com/index.php/about-us>
- Learn more about U of A Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service: <https://www.uaex.edu/about-extension/mission-statement.aspx>
- Learn more about Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance: <http://www.arhungeralliance.org/about/history-mission/>
- Learn more about Plantopia: <http://www.plantopianlr.com/>
- Learn more about American Composting: <http://www.americancomposting.com/about-us/>

Disclaimer

This case study includes information obtained during a series of interviews with Isaac Henry, director, Fit2Live, and special assistant to the mayor of North Little Rock. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) received written permission to use this information. Additional information was gathered from the Healthy Active Arkansas plan and the North Little Rock Fit2Live website.