

Healthy Active Arkansas Case Study: NEA Baptist Health



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

The first of ACHI's five regional learning network meetings highlighted a unique public-private partnership through NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation's Center for Healthy Children. The center's focus is on physical education and activity in school age children, fitting within the fourth of nine Healthy Active Arkansas (HAA) priority areas. The goal of this HAA priority area is to ensure that all students—from early child care through college—have opportunities for daily physical activity and quality physical education that promotes healthy lifestyles.

NEA BAPTIST CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The foundation started in 2001 by physicians as an extension of the NEA Baptist Clinic, with the mission to change lives in Northeast Arkansas. In 2005, the foundation saw a need for obesity engagement in children due to a growing number of physician consults from parents about school Body Mass Index (BMI) reports provided to them as required by Arkansas Act 1220 of 2003. With limited options available to assist parents, the foundation formed the center "to teach, motivate, and guide overweight children and their families how to build a solid foundation of proper nutrition and regular exercise for a healthy lifestyle." The center works directly with schools and physicians, taking referrals of children ages 8 to 12 who have a BMI of 30 or greater.

NEA BAPTIST CENTER FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN

The Center accepts 80 to 100 children into a no-cost 12-week program that engages children in regular exercise and proper nutrition, equips them with resources, and promotes lifelong healthy lifestyles. Based on the demand and success of this program, the center developed a similar program for teens 13 to 17 years of age. The new teen program implemented in the summer of 2017 had an additional requirement of parental participation. As part of this program, parents learn cooking tips, healthy selection techniques, and engage with community leaders on keeping their children healthy. Erica Huffstetler, wellness program manager for NEA Baptist Wellness Center, and Robbie Johnson, director of development for NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation, serve as leads for the center.

Center for Healthy Children



Source: NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation

NEA BAPTIST CENTER FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN SUCCESSES:

The center has served approximately 1,100 children over the program's existence. To date, approximately 35 percent of the children between ages 8 and 12 have been successful in reducing their BMI. Approximately 20 percent have been successful in reducing their BMI into a normal range. Huffstetler recounts an individual

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

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success story: “A boy around the age of 10 or 11 was so overweight he couldn’t bend over and tie his shoes. By the end of the 12-week session, he could bend over enough to tie his shoes, and it brought his parents to tears. They were so excited.”

REFERENCES

- Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas at: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
- Learn more about the Center for Healthy Children at: <http://www.neacfoundation.org/programs/centerforhealthychildren>
- Learn more about the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation at: <http://www.neacfoundation.org/Home>

Disclaimer

This case study includes information obtained during a series of interviews with Erica Huffstetler, wellness program manager, for NEA Baptist Wellness Center. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) received written permission to use this information. Additional information was gathered from the Healthy Active Arkansas plan, the Center for Healthy Children, and the NEA Baptist Charitable Foundation.

Encouraging Healthy Behaviors:

“I encourage starting nutrition and exercise at an early age to gain control of health problems such as obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.”

“It’s very important that parents are involved in every aspect of their child’s health and to make an impact on them to live a healthy lifestyle.”

—Erica Huffstetler
Wellness Program Manager