

Community Impact

Childhood Obesity Epidemic Challenged in Fairfield County

Wendy, an elementary school student, was overweight. She couldn't keep up with her classmates in activities. Her personal grooming and hygiene led to teasing and ridicule. She withdrew and had few friends.

Obesity rates continue to rise in the United States. Since 1980, being overweight has doubled for children and tripled for adolescents. With sixteen percent of children and adolescents age 6 to 19 overweight (9 million children), childhood obesity remains a pressing public health concern.

In 2004 United Way of the Midlands Health and Recovery Council awarded a three-year grant to Fairfield County's Way to Go Kids program that fights childhood obesity. Through the eight-week fitness and nutrition groups at Fairfield County Recreation Commission and the county's after-school programs, over 200 children have been served since funding from the grant began.

Additionally, Way to Go Kid has also educated approximately 3,000 youth and adults about obesity, good health and nutrition through participation in community health fairs, partnerships with local physicians and presentations at school events.

Participants in the program became aware of healthier eating choices and more active lifestyles while they also lost weight and lowered their Body Mass Index. Participating parents noticed increased family bonding and learned of ways to exercise more with their children.

Wendy completed the Way to Go Kid eight-week course in which she learned how to eat healthier and be more active. After finishing the course, Wendy's teachers and counselors recognized a notable improvement in Wendy's self-esteem, personal hygiene and appearance. She also made a friend during the program, and they became walking partners at school.

United Way of the Midlands' Community Councils research issues and ask for proposals to address those issues, and then select programs that best address the issue and award grants to fund those programs. Follow-up and evaluation ensure that the programs make progress toward meeting the targeted results—lasting change right here in the Midlands.

United Way of the Midlands is donors, partners and volunteers discovering and responding to the crucial needs of our community—then finding resources to address those needs and following up to make sure the work gets done.

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