

## Heal One World: Fit Right In Program

### Summary

Heal One World provides programs that focus on preventative and holistic treatments to raise awareness about health. The organization has a staff of credentialed professionals in the field of health and fitness. In its pilot programs, Los Angeles classes have been attended by over 350 low-income families.

The national trend for obesity in children is on the rise. Studies show economically distressed communities have a higher obesity rate than the national average. In low-income areas, affordable and accessible health options are limited. Families have few options of where to shop for healthy food as well as limited venues for physical activity.

The goal of the Fit Right In program is for participants to have an increased understanding of how their eating and lifestyle habits affect their health in the short-term and long-term; increased understanding of how their families can support each other to change their habits; increased awareness of the availability of healthy and affordable food in their community; increased cooking knowledge; increased knowledge that they can lead healthy and fulfilled lives. Participants' development will be monitored as they track daily nutrition and physical activity with journals and undergo weekly performance reviews with the dietician and fitness instructor. Additionally, participants will fill out entrance and exit evaluations to better understand expectations for the workshops and ways to improve the program.

Heal One World's Fit Right In Program will show an increase in participants' intake of fruits and vegetables and their activity levels within a year. Moreover, the Fit Right In program will increase participants' awareness of healthy living choices.

The Fit Right In Program has obtained the sponsorship of Wells Fargo, Chase, Sobe, Waiialua Soda, Popchips and others who strive to make healthy food choices available. Community partners include the Boys and Girls Club of Venice, Mercados Madres, Community Supported Agriculture LA, STAR, Eco-Station, and the Venice Family Clinic.

Heal One World is requesting \$35,000 to fund the Fit Right In program.

## **Applicant Organization**

The mission of Heal One World is to help connect people in need of preventative healthcare, natural non-invasive treatments and guidance learning self help techniques that are generally not covered by insurance. This help is offered on a sliding scale, free or donation basis.

Skye Kelly founded and incorporated Heal One World in April 2009. Severely injured in a car accident, and faced with disabilities, Skye regained her health through non-invasive techniques and changes in diet. She was surprised that these effective treatments were not covered by health insurance. This motivated her to earn certification as a Holistic Health Practitioner and, combined with her business experience, to establish Heal One World. Skye also graduated with a Masters in Fine Arts. Skye currently serves as Executive Director of Heal One World.

In just two short years, Heal One World has developed and delivered yoga and pilates classes to over 350 people in Los Angeles. With thousands of inquiries through the website, it has provided information on alternative health care, diet, and environmental issues relevant to the Los Angeles area. Speakers have included Eric Dolgin D.O., Doborah Eden Tull, N.D., R.D. In May 2010, Heal One World held the Awareness Film Festival featuring more than 90 films to raise funds to help people obtain affordable treatment. Heal One World has developed a database of self-help exercises and ideas people can use when they are unable to find treatment. Heal One World services are provided by volunteers, all certified or registered in nutrition, movement, yoga or exercise.

Heal One World's active and dedicated Board of Directors, which oversees all aspects of the organization's operations, is comprised of a registered nurse, a medical assistant/dietician, an attorney, and a filmmaker.

Guided by its strategic plan, Heal One World plans to continue to reach those in need of non-invasive preventative care. Heal One World is also planning to expand to other cities and provide programming for low-income families who lack access to healthy outlets for diet and exercise.

## **The Problem**

In 2009, according to a study done by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only 8% of low-income high school students in Los Angeles reported having a diet containing the daily amounts of fruits and

vegetables recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Likewise, the study found only 8% of low-income high school students exercise more than 60 minutes per week, compared to 20% of all high school students in Los Angeles.

The long-term consequences of an unbalanced diet and low-level activity rates include many health problems such as heart disease, Diabetes, and obesity. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that obese children, especially those in teenage years, have a 70% chance of being obese as adults. These numbers increase to 80% if one or more of their parents is obese. The CDC goes on to state that the obesity rate has more than tripled over the last twenty years. Moreover, CDC findings show that the percentage of children with Diabetes has jumped from 4% before 1990 to as much as 45% during the 1990s. More implications include low life expectancy and rising health care costs.

A 2009 study done by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that surveyed Los Angeles high school students found that 14% were obese, 89% ate vegetables less than three times per day, and 22% drank one soda at least one time per day. Moreover, the survey found that 58% of students did not attend physical education classes daily when they were in school and 39% watched television 3 or more hours per day on an average school day.

For low-income families, unhealthy eating patterns can be explained by a lack of access to healthy food and nutrition information. For example, healthy food options are often more expensive and are not always available in low-income areas. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, between 1985 and 2003, the cost of fruits and vegetables rose by 120% while the cost of soft drinks, sweets and sugars rose by less than 50%. Moreover, in low-income areas of Los Angeles, supermarkets with fresh produce and healthy options have been replaced by inexpensive convenience stores and fast food restaurants that only offer high-calorie and super-size portion choices. Another factor contributing to poor nutrition in children is the unhealthy options available in school cafeterias, where some children report eating 2-3 of their daily meals during the week.

High school students' low activity levels reflect a similar problem of access to sports facilities and exercise opportunities. Parks and outside venues in low-income areas are not always deemed a safe space, limiting the places children can exercise. Often, sports programs are expensive.

Low-income families have stated that a healthy lifestyle is not a high priority for them when compared to issues of basic needs.

There are several diverse causes of unbalanced diet and low activity levels among Los Angeles students, especially low-income students. Effective remedies will therefore entail a preventative holistic approach incorporating elements of information, access, and motivation.

### **Program Outcome**

Within one year, of the 200 students who participate in Heal One World's Fit Right In Program, 40% will have a diet consisting of the FDA-recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables, compared to the current 8%. Likewise, 40% will exercise more than 60 minutes per week.

These students, between the ages of 8 and 16, will be from low-income backgrounds and will reflect the problems facing the community related to diet and exercise. The Fit Right In Program will document the students' progress by tracking their weight, food intake and exercise levels on a biweekly basis. The program will also raise awareness of the importance of healthy food choices and physical fitness for children.

### **Methods**

Students will be recruited into the Fit Right In Program throughout the year from the Venice Boys and Girls Club as well as by referrals from participating students and parents. Volunteers coordinate the intake and verification of the participants' eligibility based on being under the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

The Fit Right In Program will provide field trips to grocery stores and Farmer's Markets, workshops with team activities, and exercise classes. The field trips will provide information on nutritious food choices. The workshops will teach students to prepare healthy meals as well as the merits of a balanced diet. Workshops will also aid students in building self-esteem through diet and exercise choices, which will be enhanced by team-building activities with their peers. The Fit Right In Program will be provided to these low-income families at no cost, though students will be given incentives for keeping up with the program.

Field trips will take students to grocery stores and markets in their area twice each month. During these trips, a registered dietician coaches

students on which foods are the healthier choices. During the field trips, the dietitian teaches the students how to navigate the grocery to find fresh produce and nutrient-rich food options. The dietitian also works with the students to understand nutrition information and read nutrition labels. Students will learn the breakdown of calories, sugars and fat content.

The Fit Right In workshops are offered at the Fit Right In Studio, located in Mid-City Los Angeles. The Fit Right In Studio is 1200 square feet with a classroom and a fitness studio. The studio is close to public schools and the Venice Boys and Girls Club and works in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to reach the target population of low-income students in Los Angeles.

Hour-long workshops include lessons on food preparation, nutrition, the importance of exercise, and body image. They are offered twice a week, 52 weeks a year. Students learn to prepare nutritious meals in an engaging environment with their parents and peers. Students also learn how to calculate the ratio of calories consumed versus calories burned so that they can learn the benefits of exercise and weight maintenance. Other workshops focus on the students' body image, help them overcome their insecurities, and help them build confidence, emphasizing the importance of exercise.

Exercise classes are another key component to the Fit Right In program. Class options are urban dance, yoga, and pilates, taught by certified instructors. Hour-long exercise classes are offered twice a week, 52 weeks a year. In addition to the physical benefits, the classes provide opportunities for team-building and peer-bonding. These classes provide exercise options in a region where there is limited access to other fitness facilities.

### **Evaluation Plan**

The Program Director, with assistance from partnering agency staff, will assess program and process outcomes quantitatively and qualitatively, using pre- and post- assessment, observation and journaling. All evaluation methods used are approved by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. All evaluations methods will be authorized by permission slips signed by parents or guardians of students served.

Using surveys and journaling, staff will monitor students' eating habits and activity levels for one month prior to services, during services, and within one month after the program ends. Staff will also administer BMI assessments within one month prior to and at the end of the service period. During service delivery, students will maintain diet and activity journals, and staff will record attendance at classes and field trips. Teachers and guidance counselors will distribute activity journals, eating journals, surveys, and questionnaires to students. Teachers will help students maintain journal entries daily. Students daily eating and activity journals will be logged into database and compared to the baseline set from pre-service evaluations. All evaluations will be collected by the program director and summarized in quarterly reports.

To assess longer-term program impact, Heal One World, in cooperation with partner agencies, will also conduct a survey three years after services are rendered.

By the end of one year, specific expected results are:

1. Out of the 200 students served, at least 80 students will independently demonstrate improved eating habits, as defined by an increase in the daily intake of fruits and vegetables scaled to USDA guidelines.
2. Out of the 200 students served, 80 students will independently demonstrate improved activity levels consisting of 60 minutes of exercise a week.

The Program Director will also assess the effectiveness of specific processes used:

1. Over a 12 month period, did Heal One World will provide 200 low-income students with nutritional and physical fitness services?
2. Over a 12 month period, did 80 out of 200 students improve eating habits consisting of diets that have the daily recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables?
3. Over a 12 month period, did 80 out of 200 students improve weekly activity levels with at least 60 minutes of physical fitness per week.

### **Future Support**

Heal One World is committed to sustaining funding for the Fit Right In Program. Besides fundraising, Heal One World will use volunteer and in-kind support to reduce expenses. Fund-raising from partnering agencies will also help sustain future services.

Heal One World is raising funding from event fund-raising, an individual donor campaign, community organizations, government block grants and private foundation grant proposals.

Heal One World operates an ongoing Film Festival, which generates revenue estimated at \$10,000 per year. A portion of this revenue will be dedicated to the Fit Right In program. The Festival, which is held at the Showcase Theater in Hollywood, hosts 90 screenings. Additionally, there are monthly screenings held at the Fit Right In Studio.

Various volunteers, college internship and subsidized employment programs will provide Heal One World with staff support to help run daily operation and various fund-raising programs. Various duties would involve clerical work, transferring journal entries into database and community outreach. Local businesses and community organizations will help provide in-kind donations to reduce expenses of supplies and office equipment.

Partnering agencies have committed to their own fund-raising efforts to help supplement a portion of the funding. Partnering school districts and non-profit organizations have little cash to pay for additional health services for their students, but do have the capacity to raise funding through small event fund-raisers.

Heal One World and its partnering agencies are committed to sustaining services. Services have been modeled after other successful programs that have proven to solve poor nutrition. Through fund-raising and efforts to keep expenses to a minimum, Fit Right In will be able to sustain services far into the future.