

Healthy Active Arkansas Case Study: Drew Central School District



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 second of ACHI's five network meetings, in Tillar, highlighted Drew Central School District's unique school-based nutrition (Priority Area 3) and physical activity programs (Priority Area 4).

DREW CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Located in Monticello, Drew Central School District has an engaged and active School Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Committee that formed under the authority in Arkansas Act 1220 of 2003. The goal of the School Nutrition and Physical Activity Advisory Committee is to “support, promote, advocate, plan, leverage, and implement programs and policies that would develop healthier school environments for students, parents, staff, and faculty.” This goal aligns with four of the nine Healthy Active Arkansas priority areas: nutritional standards in schools, physical education and activity in schools, healthy worksites, and sugar-sweetened beverage reduction.

DREW CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SUCCESSES

Tiffany Barnard is the Child Nutrition Director and President of the Wellness Committee for Drew Central School District. Under Barnard's leadership, Drew Central has emphasized healthier options in school cafeterias, acquired better playground equipment to enhance physical activity, and developed an employee wellness challenge to increase the amount of physical activity for teachers and staff during school hours. According to Barnard, the emphasis on healthy lifestyles is necessary to educate students on the broader efforts in the school district to address climbing childhood obesity rates. In 2016, as part of the district's broader “culture of change,” Drew Central added salad bars to school cafeterias and the Drew Central Parent-Teacher Organization purchased new playground equipment. In

Drew Central Nutrition Program Salad Bar



2017, Drew Central staff participated in the annual Blue & You Fitness Challenge, the goal of which is to encourage physical activity between similar organizations. Drew Central won first-place in their employer size category and in the school competition for Southeast Arkansas. Concurrent with the Blue & You Fitness Challenge, Drew Central engaged in a water challenge to educate about the benefits of drinking water, as well as decrease the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Barnard indicated that “many staff members have continued to exercise on a regular basis” and some staff have even reported “better sleep,

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increased energy, and an overall improvement in their mood.” She added that modeling behavior is an important part of engagement with students about the importance of dietary health and physical activity.

In August 2017, Drew Central School District added an element to their “culture of health” by opening a school medical clinic to treat both urgent and chronic care needs of its students.

DREW CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEXT STEPS

For the 2017-2018 school year, Drew Central’s goal is to increase physical activity among students. Drew Central Elementary will implement a pilot program to encourage fourth-grade students to complete 60 minutes of physical activity per day—including recess, morning celebration, and physical education class. To assess outcomes, Drew Central will evaluate the pilot project’s goals: improve test scores, reduce behavior issues, and decrease absenteeism.

Drew Central Blue & You Fitness Challenge Representatives



From left to right: Michele Roberts, Tiffany Barnard, Rena McCone

REFERENCES

- Learn more about Healthy Active Arkansas: <https://healthyactive.adh.arkansas.gov/WebsiteContent/ThePlan.aspx>
- Learn more about the Drew Central School District:
 - <http://www.drewcentral.org/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/Drew-Central-Elementary-188538497874030/>
 - <https://deltadailynews.com/drew-central-approves-in-school-medical-clinic/>
 - <http://www.monticellolive.com/drew-central-participated-in-annual-blue-you-fitness-challenge/#more-202164>

Disclaimer

This case study includes information obtained during a series of interviews with Tiffany Barnard, child nutrition director, for Drew Central School District. 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 Drew Central School District website and Facebook page.