

Weller Health Education Center

we know kids



Aetna Foundation and the Weller Health Education Center fight childhood obesity in Allentown

With a \$50,000 grant from the Aetna Foundation, the Weller Center has kicked-off a comprehensive, community-based nutrition and fitness program for families and children in Allentown, Pennsylvania, to reduce and prevent childhood obesity and improve overall health and wellness among Allentown residents.

Through the program, called Niños en Acción (Kids in Motion), more than 5,800 children from the Allentown School District are participating in measurable, school-based programs on nutrition and physical activity taught by the Weller Center's health educators. Weller will also reach hundreds of families this spring through free family education nights and parent programs sponsored by the Aetna

Foundation where we'll provide vital information on how to cook, shop and increase physical activity at home.

"For the first time in two centuries, our children may have shorter life expectancies than their parents due to rising obesity rates," said Melissa Lee, the Weller Center's president and CEO. "We're thrilled to have a partner like the Aetna Foundation who shares our commitment to stopping and reversing the devastating effects of childhood obesity."

The Allentown School District is the fourth largest in Pennsylvania with 71 percent of its students considered economically disadvantaged. Sixty percent of the

student population is Hispanic—an ethnicity which experiences higher rates of obesity than non-Hispanic Caucasians. Recent Body Mass Index (BMI) screenings of elementary students in Allentown revealed that more than 40 percent of the students were overweight or obese.

"We know Allentown's children face a higher risk of being overweight, which often leads to devastating illnesses including diabetes and heart disease. Together with the Aetna Foundation, we can give these children and their families the tools to make healthier choices so they can live long and healthy lives," said Lee.

Uncovering and addressing health risks in central PA

Through an educational improvement tax credit gift from Capital BlueCross in Harrisburg, the Weller Center is conducting a comprehensive health risk behavior survey and follow-up programming among students in the Bermudian Springs School District in York Springs, Pennsylvania. The gift will also fund preventive health education programs from the Weller Center for hundreds of students in the Camp Hill School District this spring.

Targeting teen dating violence: New research and programs from the Weller Center

Verizon Foundation underwrites new initiative in northeastern Pennsylvania

Last spring, while conducting health risk behavior surveys at school districts in northeastern Pennsylvania, the Weller Center's health educators discovered some disturbing information.

"We found that incidences of dating violence were significantly higher than the national average—sometimes more than double—in certain school districts," said Suzy Supnet, director of education. "We knew we needed to take a closer look at why dating violence is more prevalent in this region and figure out a way to reach kids and stop the violent behavior before it starts."

The Weller Center then turned to the Verizon Foundation which provided a \$14,000 grant to identify the perceptions on dating violence among teens in Monroe, Carbon, Pike and Wayne counties in Pennsylvania and provide programming to reduce and prevent these violent behaviors.

With the Verizon grant, the Weller Center is currently conducting focus groups and online surveys to learn how thousands of middle school students in northeastern Pennsylvania perceive dating and domestic violence, what influences their perception and how technology

impacts dating violence behaviors. Lehigh University's Social Science Data Center is partnering with Weller to cull and analyze the data from student surveys and focus groups.

With this information, health educators from the Weller Center will develop a new, outcomes-based dating violence prevention workshop for middle school students on the components of a healthy and an unhealthy relationship including how to break the cycle of violence. This program will be available to schools throughout the Weller Center's service area later this spring.

Highmark helps students get healthy!

So far this school year, nine schools and more than 400 students in grades two and six have participated in the Weller Center's new six-week program series on nutrition education and building self-esteem through funding from the Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge Grant program. The Weller Center's multi-week program is designed to improve character development among students and change the next

generation's attitude toward good health and proper nutrition. During the program, the Weller Center presents a series of 45-minute workshops on nutrition and character education for students in grades two and six over six weeks. Programs utilize measurable, behavior-focused strategies to promote healthy eating and physical activity and improve self-esteem, emotional well-being and resilience. For more information on the

Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge Grant program, please visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org.

Make your annual gift today!

Honoring your friends or loved ones this holiday by sending an annual fund gift in their name is the perfect way to share the meaning of the season. The Weller Center champions children's health by fighting against the preventable causes that lead to their premature death and diminished quality of life. Your gift is critical as it enables us to keep our programs both accessible and affordable to the children and schools who need them the most. Make your secure, online gift today by visiting www.wellercenter.org or call the development office at 610-258-8500, ext. 18 for more information.



Outstanding Friend to Kids Awards

outstanding
**FRIEND
To KIDS**
awards

More than 150 people celebrated the 7th Annual Outstanding Friend to Kids awards which took place on Friday, November 13, at Cedar Crest College. The fun and inspiring event raised more than \$25,000 to support the delivery of the Weller Center's vital health education programs in our region's schools.



Honorees included Julian Ray Brown and Ashley Loiseau as Outstanding Young Achievers; Kathleen Mills as Outstanding Children's Advocate; and the Program for Women and Families and Valley Youth House as Outstanding Organizations.



Weller introduces four new programs for 2009-10

Based on information the Weller Center gathered from baseline health risk behavior surveys, national statistical data and feedback from the schools, four important new programs were introduced for the 2009-2010 school year.

Scapegoat Escape

This program builds on the lessons learned from our very popular program, "Where Do Bullies Grow?" and explores what it means to be a target of a bully. Students have the opportunity to learn steps in overcoming adversity and how to develop and maintain a positive self-image.

Reproduction Discussion

Our most popular program is "Life Begins" which is an explanation of the reproductive system, fetal development and birth with an emphasis on personal responsibility. Because of feedback from the students, schools asked us to add a second program to allow students to review the information presented in "Life Begins" and ask questions about this sensitive topic.

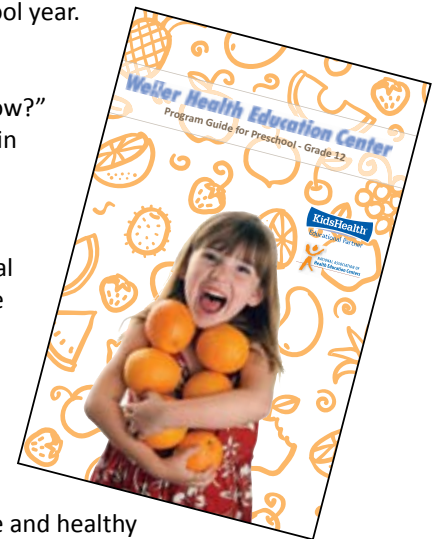
Relationship Respect

A disturbing trend is the increasing incidence of dating violence in children in middle and high school. To combat this increasing problem, "Relationship Respect" was developed to address the issues relating to pre-dating attitudes and behaviors to better prepare pre-teens and teens for safe and healthy relationships.

Facing the Odds

As part of our addiction prevention programming, "Facing the Odds" helps older adolescents better understand how addiction works in the brain and the dangers associated with addiction and compulsive gambling.

To learn more about these exciting new programs or any of the other 30 programs we offer for children in pre-K to 12th grade, please contact Ann Biernat-Rucker at (610) 258-8500 ext. 26 or arucker@wellercenter.org.



Donley Foundation underwrites programs for the Boys and Girls Club

More than 400 children from the Boys and Girls Club of Allentown participated in nutrition, character education and addiction prevention workshops from the Weller Center this fall. The programs were made possible through a grant from the Donley Foundation. Elementary students learned the fundamentals of safe exercise during Kids in Motion and discussed the dangers of smoking during Smokin' Joe's Gotta Go. Third and fourth graders jumped out of their seats to participate in Food Feud, our interactive game show that teaches students about calories, nutrients,

energy expenditure, and reading food labels. Pre-teens learned how to navigate the sometimes difficult transition to sixth grade during the Mean Streets of



Middle School while 9th through 12th graders learned and practiced refusal skills and how drug and alcohol addiction impact the brain during the program In the Know. "By partnering with the Boys and Girls Club of Allentown, it's our goal not only to improve the health literacy and physical health of the participants, but also to strengthen the children's emotional health by helping kids build a strong sense of self as they enter adolescence," said Megan Delp, Weller Center health educator.

The Weller Health Education Center seeks to measurably improve children's lives by giving students the tools they need to make informed and healthy life choices.

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Official registration and financial information for the Weller Center can be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Weller Health Education Center

325 Northampton Street
Easton, PA 18042
610-258-8500

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