



***FINAL REPORT TO  
THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION:  
HEALTHY CHILDREN HEALTHY FUTURES INITIATIVE***



September 2005 to June 2006

The  
After-School  
INSTITUTE



Report Submitted by Lori Carter and Rebkha  
Atnafou, The After-School Institute, and Jennifer  
Buher-Kane, University of Pennsylvania Center for  
Research on Youth and Social Policy—Out of School  
Time Resource Center



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Childhood obesity has reached a national epidemic and poses a great concern because obesity is a known risk factor for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and for certain cancers, especially in low-income minorities. The amount of time that children and youth spend participating in physical activities has decreased markedly over the past few decades (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). After-school hours provide an opportune time for children to be engaged in physical activity and to be engaged in nutrition education. The After-School Institute (TASI) ASI, with its wide network of after-school programs under Baltimore's After-School Strategy that serve thousands of children, felt compelled to address the childhood obesity epidemic by implementing a simple, well-packaged and evaluated intervention developed by Strang Cancer Prevention Center and entitled *Healthy Children Healthy Futures* (HCHF) in September 2005.

This initiative began with funds from Met Life Foundation to work with five (5) after-school programs in Baltimore City and this quickly expanded to a total of twelve sites<sup>1</sup> with Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) funding the additional sites. One of RWJF four goal areas is to promote healthy communities and lifestyles. Specifically, this includes helping halt the rise in childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating and physical activity in schools and communities throughout the nation and this partnership with Strang, Met Life, TASI and after-school programs in Baltimore was ideal.

The goal of *Healthy Children Healthy Futures* is to create a replicable program for children and their parents to become advocates — through their schools, families and communities — for healthy eating and physical activity. The *Healthy Children Healthy Futures* project is intended for under-served youth, ages 9 to 13. The HCHF initiative has three components—education of children, parents and media literacy and animation.

The experience of implementing Health Children, Healthy Futures in Baltimore was positive and details of the process, the successes, the challenges and recommendations are in the full report that follows. In general, after-school program providers felt it was a fun and interactive environment in which they learned how to implement HCHF in their program as well as gained some background information on the importance of addressing childhood obesity. The youth were involved and excited about the curriculum during the hands-on activities such as making fruit salad or setting up video equipment. While youth initially were ambivalent in trying healthy snacks, once they tried it they enjoyed it and they understood the importance of eating healthy. The youth enjoyed the physical fitness activities. The challenges were that programs need extensive training in nutrition and physical fitness, need for flexibility in program implementation, lack of media literacy skills by youth and the program providers, parental engagement to develop and sustain healthy eating habits, and lack of or limited funding (although it did not preclude programs from participating in this study). The recommendations for future planning is to develop strategies to address the challenges, engage the capacity building intermediary (TASI) to provide on-going training and support.

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<sup>1</sup> See Attachment 1

# Attachment 1

## Baltimore Site Listing and Number of Youth Participating in HCHF Project

Organization	Site Location	# Youth participating in HCHF project (November 05)	# Youth participating in HCHF project (June 05)
YMCA of Central Maryland	Westport Academy	30	30
YMCA of Central Maryland	Dunbar Middle School	15	15
YMCA of Central Maryland	College Gardens Apartments	25	17
Franciscan Youth Center	Waverly Middle School	50	23
YMCA of Central Maryland	City Springs School	30	36
Child First Authority	George Kelson Elementary School	15	12
Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks	Leithwalk Recreation Center	12	14
Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks	Patterson Recreation Center	20	17
Academy of Success	Academy of Success	25	18
Southeast Youth Academy	Fort View Recreation Center	45	35
Holistic Life Foundation	Friends School	15	13
YMCA of Central Maryland	Diggs Johnson Middle School	15	15
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>		297	245