



Promoting Childhood Health and Wellness

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OBJECTIVE

We partnered with the Boys & Girls Club of Evansville, Indiana, to support a vulnerable population of children during this pandemic by creating engaging and interactive learning activities covering the following health related topics: careers in healthcare, COVID-19 safety tips, physical exercise, healthy dietary habits and methods for handling stress.

HEALTH CHALLENGE

The Boys & Girls Club seeks to create a positive environment for at risk youth through a variety of services and programs. These programs focus on a variety of activities: arts and crafts, sports, healthy lifestyles, technology and character development. In a typical year, the Boys & Girls Club of Evansville serves 2000 kids with a daily attendance of about 350.

Due to COVID-19 visitor restrictions, the Boys & Girls Club has not allowed volunteers into their facility, meaning many of their normal events and programming have been cancelled. SWI-AHEC sought to fill the gap created from this unprecedented circumstance by creating supplemental programming to be delivered in a virtual format. The topics for each program were chosen with help from Boys & Girls Club leadership and were based on what educational content they felt needed to be addressed.

VANDERBURGH COUNTY

Population: 181,721


- Below 18 years old: 21.8%
- Children in Poverty: 23% (19% Indiana)

Top 6 Community Health Priorities:

- Mental Health
- Obesity/Physical Activity
 - Indiana Children 10-17 years old Obesity Rate 16.7%
- Food Insecurity/Access
- Poverty
- Chronic Health Conditions
- Substance Abuse

Boys & Girls Club of Evansville

- Total Students Daily:**
 - Pre-COVID: average of 350 students
 - COVID: 12-30 during months of Oct and Nov 2020
- Presentation Attendance:** 3-6
- Ages:** 6-17
- Race:** African American > Caucasian > Hispanic
- Sex:** Females > Males
- Area identified as an at-risk zip code for adulthood and childhood obesity in the 2017 Vanderburgh County Community Health Improvement Plan



EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

AHEC Scholars partnered with Boys & Girls Club of Evansville at the Bellemeade Avenue location to create healthy behaviors workshops for the students. AHEC Scholars worked closely with Amy Hahn, Cultural and Educational Director at the Boys & Girls Club, to identify health-related information the children of the Boys & Girls Club are not routinely exposed to within their public educational system. The goal of each workshop was to teach the children about healthy behaviors through interactive activities and provide information to take home to the family. AHEC Scholars created three workshops, approximately 90 minutes each, with central themes and activities outlined in each Workshop.

Given COVID-19 group gathering restrictions, AHEC Scholars performed all workshops remotely through Zoom. Attendance per workshop ranged from 3-6 students due to room dimensions and technology limitations.

WORKSHOP #1

Workshop #1: Introduction to Health Professions and COVID-19

- Educated students about various healthcare professions which included: level of education, salary, and main job duties. Provided take-home informational sheet.
- Physician assistant student, Paul Henderson, taught students how to check heart rate, pupil response to light. Physical therapy student, Sheena Voge, taught students job duties of physical therapist by performing a Functional Movement Screening with the students.
 - Assessed children's understanding of healthcare professions by administering a matching worksheet.
- Created COVID-19 PowerPoint presentation that discussed the following:
 - What is COVID-19 and how does it compare to influenza and common cold?
 - How to protect yourself from COVID-19.
- Hand hygiene with interactive Germ Juice hand-washing activity.
 - Collected data on improvements of handwashing before and after the presentation.



Figure 1. Paul Henderson teaching students how to check radial pulse. Sarah Kennedy also pictured as active participant.



Figure 2. Paul Henderson teaching students how to check carotid pulse. Sheena Voge also pictured as active participant.



Figure 3. Boys and Girls Club students attempting to check their radial pulse.



Figure 4. Boys and Girls Club students attempting to check their carotid pulse.

Figure 5. Boys and Girls Club students checking their hands for residual Germ Juice powder before teaching the students proper handwashing techniques.

WORKSHOP #2

Workshop #2: Physical Health, Fitness, and Nutrition

Collaboration with Sullivan Cox, Pilates instructor at Club Pilates, to provide a pre-recorded 20-minute introductory Pilates workout. AHEC Scholars completed exercise with Boys & Girls Club students over Zoom.

- Discussed other forms of exercise that are possible to do from home. Students listed different ways they typically exercise.
- Students measured their own heart rate before and after exercise for continued practice from the previous workshop.
- Educated students about proper nutrition and how to incorporate food groups for increased nutrition.
- Provided take home information sheet which showed how to read a nutrition label, list of vitamin rich foods, and healthy snack alternatives when experiencing cravings (sweets, salty, etc.). Students learned what each value means (sodium, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, fiber, added sugars).
- Performed interactive demonstration of number of added sugars in common snacks including chocolate candy, soda, Gatorade and juice.
- Created a list of healthy snack alternatives together with the students.
- Created a healthy smoothie which included frozen fruits, spinach, Greek yogurt and orange juice.
 - Assessed the nutritional value of the smoothie with the students.



Figure 7. Sarah Kennedy demonstrating deep breathing exercises as a method to decrease stress during Workshop #3. Sheena Voge is also pictured as an active participant.



Figure 8. Boys and Girls Club students creating DIY Stress Balls from flour, balloons, yarn and markers during Workshop #3.



Figure 9. Example of DIY Stress Ball.



Figure 10. AHEC Scholars talking with the students while students are creating their DIY stress balls. Imaged from left to right: Sheena Voge, Sarah Kennedy, Paul Henderson, Courtney Finnearty.



Figure 6. Sullivan Cox, Pilates instructor at Club Pilates, teaching the students about exercises that do not require equipment during Workshop #2.

WORKSHOP #3

Workshop #3: Mental Health and Stress Management

- Provided education on anger and stress management with PowerPoint presentation as visual aide.
- Provided education about the purpose of stress and the difference between good and bad stress with resources provided by KidsHealth.org
- Provided different methods of reducing stress (exercise, deep breathing, journaling, sleep hygiene, coloring).
- Performed deep breathing exercises led by physician assistant student, Sarah Kennedy.
- Provided education about anger management with visual aids.
- Performed journaling activity about current problems students are facing with physician assistant student, Courtney Finnearty.
- Created DIY stress balls with Sheena Voge, physical therapy student.
- Assessed students' ability to think of ways to manage anger and stress through recall.

OUTCOMES

Workshop 1:

- Workshop 1 career matching worksheet results varied due to differences in reading comprehension and time constraints. Based on a preliminary verbal survey, students were able to identify 1-2 health careers out of 14 options. Upon completion of the activity, the students were able to identify physician assistant, dental hygienist, physical therapist, and social worker. This would be better assessed in the future by creating assessments that are appropriate for each grade level and/or reading ability.
- The Boys & Girls Club staff has incorporated more health careers in their monthly Career Bingo game. One of the participants from this workshop was able to correctly recall the different health careers.
- Workshop 1 hand hygiene activity resulted in the children practicing better hygiene techniques in the restroom. For example, one participant opened the bathroom door with a paper towel after washing her hands. Boys & Girls Club staff has repeated the hand hygiene activity 3 times with new participants.

Workshop 2:

- Amy Hahn commented, "The boys were really nervous about not being flexible enough (for Workshop 2 Pilates activity) but were really proud of themselves when they saw how everyone struggled with the moves."
- Boys & Girls Club staff hosts a cooking class regularly. Participants from the smoothie making activity brought in different smoothie recipes to try for multiple cooking classes. Amy Hahn commented, "Our girls are far more likely to try new things compared to our boys, so getting the boys to try new things is a win in our book!"

Other Comments:

There was one participant that was able to attend all workshops. Boys & Girls Club attendance varies based on parents' afterschool schedules and children are not required to attend any specific afterschool activity while at the Boys & Girls Club.

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