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United Way of
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United Way's fitUnited, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC expand HOST program
Local youth-serving agencies adopt healthier practices

Pittsburgh, Pa. (February 16, 2017) – United Way's fitUnited joined with Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC for the second year to implement the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthy Out-of-School Time (HOST) guidelines within local agencies. What started with just 12 sites in 2016 has increased in 2017 to 59 sites, impacting nearly 6,500 local youth.

HOST is a six-step process to help agencies that work with kids incorporate positive healthy eating practices and physical activity standards into their day-to-day schedules. Knowing their local connections and work throughout the community, Children's Hospital invited United Way's fitUnited to join them in the effort to bring HOST to Allegheny County afterschool programs.

"fitUnited's goal is to improve the health of local children by mobilizing our community," said Kristi Burry, fitUnited director, United Way of Southwestern PA. "Our partnership with Children's Hospital through HOST provides our community's youth-centered agencies a step-by-step guide to help ensure their children have access to healthy snacks and activities."

Children's Hospital and fitUnited collaborate with participating agencies to implement HOST. Agencies assess their health, nutrition and physical activity-related policies and practices, and identify opportunities for improvement. fitUnited and Children's staff work with the agency to create a plan of action and implement the changes to help the site adopt a healthier atmosphere for the children it serves.

The process is repeated on a yearly basis, so sites are continuously measuring themselves against best practices and identifying improvements. Children's Hospital and fitUnited provide guidance to HOST participating sites throughout the year, help brainstorm ways to create a healthier environment, and connect youth-serving organizations with local resources.

“Participating in HOST encourages out-of-school program providers to make gradual changes that support the health and wellbeing of youth,” said Anne Marie Kuchera, director, Community Health, Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. “HOST’s evidence-based tools and resources, along with the support and recommendations provided by Children’s Hospital and fitUnited, empower youth to make healthy choices and become leaders and advocates for health-promoting environments.”

This year, all local YMCAs have taken on the challenge to become a HOST site. In addition, several educational and learning sites, such as Neighborhood Learning Alliance, are participating in HOST and taking steps to implement healthier practices. Some activities across agencies include inviting local college athletes to encourage active play, making healthy eating fun, and demonstrating simple cooking methods.

“The Brashear Association’s involvement with HOST helps us prioritize the development of healthy lifestyles for youth in the Hilltop, in particular, through simple, fun cooking demonstrations at local schools and during our afterschool program,” said Maggie Negrete, education coordinator at Allentown Learning and Engagement Center with The Brashear Association. “We recently taught our kids how to make hummus, encouraging them to eat healthy and share these good habits with their families.”

About United Way of Southwestern PA – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

About Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC — Regionally, nationally, and globally, [Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC](#) is a leader in the treatment of childhood conditions and diseases, a pioneer in the development of new and improved therapies, and a top educator of the next generation of pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists. Children’s Hospital has fulfilled this mission since its founding in 1890. Children’s is named consistently to several elite lists of pediatric hospitals, including ranking 10th among children’s hospitals and schools of medicine (FY 2015) in funding for pediatric research provided by the National Institutes of Health, and is one of 11 pediatric hospitals in the United States named to U.S. News & World Report’s Honor Roll of America’s “Best Children’s Hospitals” for 2016-2017.

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