

Changing it Up for Better Health



Walmart and nutrition literacy create broader awareness of NRPA's Commit to Health initiative

By Dr. Danielle Hollar

Since the launch of NRPA's five-year Commit to Health initiative, kicked off in 2014 in Miami with First Lady Michelle Obama, millions of children in low-income communities nationwide have been provided nutritious summer and after-school meals during out-of-school time (OST), and hundreds of thousands have been educated about healthy eating and physical activity habits in parks and recreation sites that provide healthy environments in accordance with Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. Through initiatives such as Commit to Health, parks and recreation agencies are playing a critical role in obesity prevention efforts by providing access to nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity in healthy environments aligned with standards that support such efforts.

In articles featured in the February 2015 and April 2014 issues of *Parks & Recreation*, Kellie May (www.parksand recreation.org/2015/February/Commit-to-Health-A-Review-of-Year-One) and Maureen Hannan (www.parksand recreation.org/2014/April/Setting-The-Standard) described the aims of Commit to Health, including its key components (summer and after-school meals, nutrition literacy, HEPA standards) and supportive network of

nationwide partners (Alliance for a Healthier Generation, National After-school Alliance, United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), among others) that are critical to its success. This month, we're revealing some of the exciting, behavior-changing results of Commit to Health experienced by kids attending park and recreation programs, as well as their parents and parks and recreation staff.

The Walmart Effect

Thanks to generous funding from the Walmart Foundation, more than three-quarters of a million previously underserved kids received nutritious meals and nutrition literacy as part of Commit to Health grant activities during 2014. In fact, in just one year, NRPA's 50 Commit to Health grantees served an astonishing 13,030,166 meals to almost 875,000 children attending park and recreation programs — a 1,639,749 increase over the number of meals served during 2013. On top of this great achievement, 257,411 children at 557 sites across the country were part of evidence-based, age-appropriate nutrition literacy programming, and 45,000 children experienced healthy changes in their OST environment thanks to implementation of HEPA standards.