



## FAST FACTS U.M. FIT2PLAY STUDY FINDINGS

### **The Miami-Dade County Parks Fit2Play® After-School Program**

*Making Children Healthier by Making Fitness Fun!*

*A Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces Department Program  
In Partnership with the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine*

#### **Problem:**

- One out of three school-aged children in the United States is overweight or obese. This increases their risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer and ultimately, premature death.
- Few accessible and affordable evidence-based programs exist that emphasize health and wellness in children.
- Between 1997 and 2012, the U.S. adult obesity rate increased almost 50%.
- So, recently, it wasn't surprising to learn that the American Medical Association has officially labeled obesity a disease that requires a range of medical interventions to advance treatment and prevention of it.
- For the first time in decades, the life expectancy of Americans is projected to **decrease** as a consequence of obesity alone.
- What does that mean for us, here locally?
- In Florida, one-out-of-four people are classified as obese and at risk for heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and depression.
- This is particularly concerning for us in Miami-Dade County, where **67.4%** of Miami-Dade County adults are either overweight or obese.
- This is the time, right now, to take action for youth prevention.

## **Solution:**

- **Inspired by the First Lady's "Let's Move!" campaign** dedicated to putting children on the path to a healthy future, Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Parks Department asked the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine to help us prove with evidenced based metrics that after-school programs, like the Miami-Dade Parks Fit2Play® After-School Program, **DO** make a difference and are essential to balancing a kid's health with school and daily life, as stated by **the Florida Recreation & Parks Association (FRPA)**, "**It does Start in Parks!**"
- Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department, following the **National Recreation & Parks Association's (NRPA) Pillar of Health and Wellness** "to lead the nation to improved health and wellness through parks and recreation," developed a **model solution** to the problem with the **Fit2Play® Program**.
- Fit2Play® is a **community- and park-based model** that has been scientifically proven by the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine to help children achieve healthy weight, cardiovascular health, fitness, and health-and-wellness knowledge.
- Fit2Play® is fully supervised **evidence/outcome-based, interactive, fun and educational wellness program** for ages 6-14 which incorporates physical activity with interactive learning to develop healthy lifestyles and good citizenship. It accomplishes the following:
  - Increases the physical activity of children through **SPARK quality recreation activities**
  - Improves the health and wellness of children through a **nutrition program** that teaches healthy choices
  - Improves school performance through **quality homework assistance** and citizenship opportunities
  - Promotes a life sport through **sports development programs**
- With recent articles in **the American Journal of Health Promotion** and **the Journal of Disability and Health**, the national medical community has also taken notice, and cast its ballot in favor of the Fit2Play® strategy and methodology.

## **Results:**

- Overweight children are **significantly decreasing unhealthy weight** while participating in Fit2Play®. (Fat mass and unhealthy body mass index significantly decreased over the school year in overweight children.)
- Normal-weight children are **maintaining a healthy growth trajectory**. (Normal weight children significantly improved their body composition by gaining muscle mass over the school year).
- Overweight children are **improving their heart health** by maintaining healthy blood pressure. (Normal systolic blood pressure levels significantly increased over the school year from 58% to 71% in overweight children while the percent with prehypertension and hypertension (12% to 7%, 29.2% to 21%, respectively) decreased.
- All children are **improving their heart health** by improving fitness levels. (Both normal weight and overweight children improved in the number of sit ups, push-ups, number of laps on the pacer test, distance on sit-and-reach flexibility test and timed run.)
- As a result of **EmpowerMe4Life**, all children are **improving their knowledge** about how to make healthy eating choices. (Both normal and overweight children significantly increased their nutrition-knowledge test scores over the school year as they learned more about health and wellness)
- In **2012 Fit2Play® success story** – brother and sister team - Moises and Chelsea Sanchez:
  - **Moises Sanchez lost 40 pounds**
    - 14 years old
    - 5'3" in height
    - Weighed 170 pounds
    - Lost 40 pounds
  - Testimonial: "I feel better and I have more energy!"
  - **Chelsea Sanchez lost 35 pounds**
    - 12 years old
    - 5'3" in height
    - Weighed 140 pounds
    - Lost 35 pounds
  - Testimonial: "I lost a lot of weight, so I don't have to wear baggy clothes. I can wear clothes that I really like."
- Located at nearly 40 Miami-Dade County Parks throughout Miami-Dade County, Fit2Play® is convenient to get to for families, in neighborhoods, near schools and places where parents and care-takers work. Fully supervised, it provides a safe place for children to learn and grow.
- For more information, parents should visit or call their nearest Miami-Dade Park or visit [www.miamidade.gov/parks](http://www.miamidade.gov/parks).