

The Arc Wisconsin-Racine: The Arc Wisconsin-Racine and Anthem BlueCross BlueShield hold graduation ceremony for “Health and Fitness for All” participants

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Racine, WI – The Arc Racine, The Arc Wisconsin and Anthem are hosting a graduation event on December 12 to celebrate the 28 local youths with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are working to improve their health through the “Health and Fitness for All” project. “Health and Fitness for All” is a 12-week program, led by instructors from The Arc Racine, that stresses the importance of exercise and a healthy diet.

Health and Fitness for All utilizes the HealthMatters™ curriculum – an evidence-based training developed by the University of Illinois at Chicago that provides a tailored physical activity and health education program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Our students really enjoyed tracking their exercise and coming back to class each week to show how they had worked out,” says The Arc Racine instructor, Alison Henry. “We now have people who know how to make healthy snacks and are taking their dog for a walk every day. The program has motivated them be healthier.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, adults with disabilities have an almost

60 percent higher rate of obesity than adults without disabilities. People with disabilities also experience three times the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer as compared to the general population. Wisconsin adults ages 18-64 with a disability have obesity rates that are almost double compared to people without disabilities (43% to 25%). Read more about Wisconsin's health disparities for people with disabilities here:

<https://arcwi.org/content/uploads/sites/17/2017/12/Health-Disparities-for-People-with-Disabilities-in-WI-FINAL.pdf>

"Anthem is committed to improving the overall health and well-being of its members and we understand the important role that healthy eating decisions and physical activity can have on achieving that goal," said Leon Lamoreaux, Anthem Medicaid plan president in Wisconsin. "We are thrilled to have worked with The Arc to help promote health education, improve access to healthy foods and increase physical activity for those who participated in this program."

Details of the graduation ceremony to honor the participants who completed the "Health and Fitness for All" program are below:

What: Graduation Ceremony and Healthy Food and Fitness Demonstrations

When: Tuesday, December 12, 9:00-10:00 AM

Where: Racine Unified District Administration Building (3109 Mt. Pleasant St. Racine, WI 53404)

Who: 28 youths with disabilities from Racine Unified Schools

The Arc Racine is one of three chapters of The Arc Wisconsin completing the Health and Fitness for All training with the support of funding from Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield. The Arc of Greater Columbia County and The Arc Fond du Lac will be hosting graduation events in 2018.

A research report authored by The Arc of the United States followed more than 1700 people with I/DD who completed the HealthMatters training. Participants lost weight, improved their BMI, lowered blood pressure and, most importantly, reported making lifestyle changes. Three out of four participants (76%) reported using the information they learned to make healthier lifestyle choices.