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“Summer camp comes to them!”

Childhood obesity program brings the “mountains to the kids”

When Louis Yuhasz, founder of Louieskids.org kept hearing from more and more kids all across the nation about their struggle with morbid obesity he knew, he needed to act faster. www.louieskids.org, a national non-profit based in Charleston, SC, and is tackling the problem of childhood obesity. Louie’s Kids has contracted Wellspring Community Programs to begin “Fit Club” at Mitchell Elementary School this summer and into the 08-09 school year. “For me, this is a no brainer,” says Yuhasz. “South Carolina has one of the highest childhood obesity rates in the nation and when you think that 70% of overweight children are likely to become overweight adults it’s even more frightening.” “To launch *Fit Club* in Charleston this summer and into the new school year is a major initiative for our national non profit – but I think we can duplicate this again and again,” he says. “This would be the first time anywhere in the nation a program of this magnitude will launch in a title-1 school” he adds.

Having been available to children and their families for the past 7 years, as a resource for programs like, YMCA memberships, counseling for kids and families, nutrition support and one-of-a-kind summer camp programs for extremely overweight children, Yuhasz began to see the need for assistance increase. “We are hearing from very overweight children everyday,” says Yuhasz. “We knew it was time to bring the mountains to the children”.

‘Fit Club’ is a newly designed and custom tailored program (developed by Louie’s Kids and Wellspring Academy) that incorporates research based interventions and ongoing support to fight childhood obesity. The plan includes nutritional education; a daily regimen of physical activity; ongoing monitoring via a website; tracking through daily journaling; family engagement; weekly conference calls with a clinician; and meetings at the school for encouragement and support for approximately six hours per week. In partnership with Wellspring Academy, Louie’s Kids has developed this 4-month

customized solution that will be implemented through collaborative efforts with school administrators and staff at Mitchell Elementary School in Charleston.

With the support of the school nurse and school administrators, 20 children will be identified who are clinically obese (BMI of 30 or higher). The program will begin in June and conclude in late September. Each week, selected children (ages xx-xx) will meet with the Program Coordinator at Mitchell Elementary School. Various activities will include an exercise regimen, nutritional counseling, utilizing the school computer lab for filling out food journals, and parent education. Children will learn how to manage a healthy weight by making healthy choices including how to snack healthy, how to cook healthy, how to incorporate physical activity in ones daily lives, how keeping a journal can help them in their journey to a healthier lifestyle, and will receive clinical support from a trained, licensed clinician from Wellspring Academy.

Hours are 4-6 pm Tuesday and Thursday's at Mitchell Elementary. One hour each meeting will have a physical fitness component and a behavioral counseling session with a trained and licensed weight-loss counselor. "We have a great program director who's a recent College of Charleston graduate with a degree in Physical Education, he's a competitive swimmer and swimming coach. We have a Clemson nutrition major assisting with program development and one of Charleston's foremost fitness professionals designing the one-hour workouts," says Yuhasz. "This is poised for great success and I will move a mountain to make sure this works, and that I bring it everywhere to kids just like these." says Yuhasz.

Louie's Kids is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization that raises funds to help treat childhood obesity, which afflicts 25 million American children today. Louie's Kids works to find the best treatment options to meet the needs of obese kids from economically disadvantaged families nationwide.

For details more details on Louie's Kids visit www.louieskids.org

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