



Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. (MHM) has funded the Get FIT program in South Texas communities since 2005. This program is targeted at elementary school children whose body mass index (BMI) is over the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, placing them at risk for Type II diabetes, and obesity related health problems. During the fall and spring semesters the Get FIT program offers a 9-week program for children and their parents. Families meet one evening per week for classes that focus on nutrition, exercise and positive parenting. Students earn \$25 gift cards for their participation.

Graduates from the school-year program are invited to attend a free, four-week summer day camp. Camp Get FIT began in the summer of 2006 after school nurses identified that their school children gain more weight in the summer than they do during the school year. Similar observations were recently published in the American Journal of Public Health (2007), demonstrating that even very young children gain inordinate amounts of weight (based on BMI) during the summer months. The difference between school and summer weight gain rates was especially large for 3 at-risk subgroups: Black children, Hispanic children, and children who were already overweight.

Camp Get FIT was created to address this concern. The primary focus is for overweight children to have fun in a safe environment during the summer months. Because we feel childhood obesity is a family concern normal weight siblings are also invited to attend. And because children can not fix this problem alone parents attend parenting classes one evening per week during the 4 weeks of camp.

This past summer 240 children attended Camp Get FIT in Carrizo Springs and Crystal City, Texas. At camp children engage in a wide variety of activities. Including yoga, swimming, dancing, team sports, field trips, arts and crafts, and cooking lessons, just to name a few. They are fed healthy meals and snacks, but are not limited on how much they consume. The focus is on keeping the children active so over-consumption of food from boredom does not take place.

Camp staff comes from health career majors enrolled at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. Students earn college credit for their community service hours. These college students are trained to direct local high school student who work as camp counselors.

MHM would like to bring the Get FIT program to Brackett ISD in the 2008-09 academic year.

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