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FACT SHEET

What is *L.E.A.N. Carroll*?

The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County organized *L.E.A.N. Carroll* in 2007 to address childhood obesity concerns in the Carroll community. More than 28% of Maryland students are overweight or obese. The *L.E.A.N. Carroll* campaign provides information, links to resources, and support to help children and families improve nutrition and increase activity levels so they are able to maintain healthy weights.

L.E.A.N.* represents *Lifestyle, Education, Activity, and Nutrition. The core messages of *L.E.A.N. Carroll* are:

- 1) ***LIFESTYLE - Make family-centered changes:*** *Eat breakfast every day. Have family meals together as often as you can. Make healthy choices when eating out. It is best not to use food to comfort, reward or punish children.*
- 2) ***EDUCATION - Teach your children healthy habits:*** *Set an example by eating nutritious foods and being physically active. Involve your child in planning meals and snacks, grocery shopping, and cooking. Make your child aware that peer and media pressure can influence food choices. Use the Nutrition Facts on food labels to make good choices.*
- 3) ***ACTIVITY - Support an active lifestyle:*** *Plan family activities that are fun and provide exercise for everyone. Aim for 60 minutes of active play time for your child on most days of the week. Limit recreational "screen time" (television, computers, and video games) to 2 hours or less a day for all family members.*
- 4) ***NUTRITION - Eat for better health:*** *Choose more fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Encourage your child to drink water instead of sweetened beverages like sodas, and fruit and sports drinks. Find substitutes to replace foods higher in fat and sugar.*

How was *L.E.A.N. Carroll* formed?

In 2007, pediatricians affiliated with Carroll Hospital Center contacted The Partnership with concern for the increasing number of children and families coping with overweight and obesity in our community. A work group was convened to address this concern, with participation from nutritionists, Health Department representatives, and health care providers. The outcome was a commitment by our organization to organize a long-term initiative that would provide resources to address healthy weights for children. We realized that families are our most important partners for improving child health, so our initiative was formed as a *family-based approach to healthy weight*.

The first *L.E.A.N. Carroll* community call to action was issued on *Healthy Kids Day* at the Carroll County Family YMCA in April 2008. We then began developing resources for health care providers and families seeking healthier weights for children.

What has *L.E.A.N. Carroll* accomplished so far?

A resource and information booklet for the *L.E.A.N. Carroll* campaign titled *L.E.A.N. Carroll* was distributed in July 2008 as an insert in the Eldersburg Eagle, and 8,000 additional printed copies were distributed through our network of partners. Later, a 36-page resource booklet called *Healthy Carroll* was also produced. Other projects by The Partnership that support *L.E.A.N. Carroll* goals are the *Healthy Dining Guide of Carroll County*, the *Stay Strong* video series, *Walk Carroll*, *NoBody is Perfect*, and *Healthy Carroll Families* – a packet of educational handouts which are emailed to schools, families, and physicians' offices several times a year.

In 2010, The Partnership was granted funding by ***Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States*** to create a project focused on improving child nutrition. *This project, called L.E.A.N. Carroll-Healthy Eating*, included these components:

- *It's Crunch Time!* – our way of encouraging schools, child care organizations, families, and kids to add more “crunch” (fruits and vegetables) to daily diets. The program engaged kids to track their fruits and vegetables, and rewarded them for eating healthier foods,
- *Farm-to-School* program – the grant gave Carroll County Public Schools resources to help provide more fresh, local fruits and vegetables to students,
- *Vending Machine Education* – nutritional information displays were created for vending machine areas in high schools to help students make healthier choices,
- *Policy change* – as part of the grant project, we promoted policy changes by schools, day-care organizations, camps, and other youth-serving organizations to improve nutrition for children.

L.E.A.N. Carroll-Healthy Eating concluded in 2012. Measurements and evaluation showed that the project was effective in improving child nutrition.

How can YOU get involved in *L.E.A.N. Carroll*?

- ***Start at home*** – be a model of healthy habits;
- ***Spread the word*** - sign up to receive and share *Healthy Carroll Families* resource handouts with “healthy lifestyles” tips;
- ***Participate*** – join a ***Walk Carroll*** walking group, or start a new one in your neighborhood, at your workplace or church.

For more information or to become involved, please contact:

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*The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County, Inc., an affiliate of Carroll Hospital Center and the Carroll County Health Department, is a private nonprofit organization working to improve health by **connecting people, inspiring action, and strengthening community.***

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