



# UnitedHealthcare Community & State 4-H Healthy Living Innovation Spotlight



## The Opportunity

**A record-breaking prevalence of obesity and rising mortality rates present significant health challenges for the country.<sup>1</sup>**

More than 13 million children nationwide live in households that are considered food insecure, meaning they have limited or inconsistent access to adequate food and nutrition throughout the year due to cost, proximity, and/or other resources.<sup>2</sup> And more than 29 million Americans live in 'food deserts'<sup>3</sup>, making access to healthy, affordable food challenging. Researchers note an association between food insecurity and medical conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease in both children and adults. According to data from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 14.8% of high school students (grades 9 to 12) nationwide were obese and 15.6% were overweight.<sup>4</sup> In the U.S., the overall costs of hunger and food insecurity in poor health outcomes and additional health care needs is estimated at \$160 billion and childhood obesity alone is estimated to cost \$14 billion annually in direct health expenses.<sup>5</sup>

**Since 2011, UnitedHealthcare Community & State has partnered with the National 4-H Council to disseminate Healthy Living Programs to empower youth and their families to develop healthier eating habits.**

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## The Innovation

As the nation's largest youth development organization, 4-H grows confident young people who are empowered for life today and prepared for career tomorrow. 4-H programs empower nearly six million young people across the U.S. through experiences that develop critical life skills. In the U.S., 4-H serves every county and parish through a network of 110 universities and more than 3,000 local offices.

Using 4-H's research-backed programming, UnitedHealthcare Community & State partners with 4-H to help youth learn about living a healthy lifestyle and empower them to purchase more nutritious, affordable foods through fun, hands-on activities and projects.

The Food Smart Families program is a community-based effort that educates about nutrition, cooking, and budgeting to reduce food insecurity and child obesity. The program uses youth as teachers to provide communities with nutrition, food budgeting, and meal-preparation programs; engages families through local events; and addresses social determinants of health by providing referrals to food safety-net programs and ingredients for healthy dishes. Youth receive 8-10 hours

of education at local schools and community centers and their families are invited to two community engagement events where youth share what they have learned with family and members of the community. UnitedHealthcare supports the program across nine states (AZ, FL, LA, MS, NE, NY, TN, WA, and WI) and has funded Healthy Living Pilots in six additional states (GA, HI, IA, OH, OK, and NC).



## The Outcomes

Since 2011, UnitedHealthcare has invested nearly \$6 million in support of 4-H Healthy Living Programs. Through this partnership, more than 400,000 youth and families in 18 states have been provided with healthy living programming on healthy eating.

Over 90 percent of youth who participated in the Food Smart Families program noted learning about healthy food choices and report that they now know what makes up a balanced diet. Youth also indicated that they are paying more attention to food labels and have given their families ideas for healthy meals and snacks. Over 80 percent of families have said they have prepared healthier foods since engaging in the program.

UnitedHealthcare is currently working with 4-H on the next phase of this partnership to continue to achieve our shared goals of reducing chronic disease and helping build healthier communities.



## Work in the Community

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Louisiana and the LSU AgCenter hosted a 4-H Food Smart Families Nutrition Workshop at the Open Health Care Clinic. The event provided hands-on food prep, taste testing, food budgeting, and healthy eating activities for the entire family. The activities were presented by 4-H teen leaders from the Food & Fitness Board.



**Working to build healthier communities.**

Visit **UHCCommunityandState.com** to learn more.

<sup>1</sup>2018 America's Health Rankings

<sup>2</sup><https://www.nokidhungry.org/who-we-are/hunger-facts>

<sup>3</sup>Food desert: According to U.S. Department of Agriculture, food deserts are defined as lack of access to a supermarket or supercenter within a mile of one's home if they live in an urban area or within 10 miles if they live in a rural area.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.hungerreport.org/costofhunger/> and [https://www.nccor.org/downloads/ChildhoodObesity\\_020509.pdf](https://www.nccor.org/downloads/ChildhoodObesity_020509.pdf)