



**For Immediate Release**

**Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to Highlight  
Beach Cities Health District and Redondo Beach Unified School District's  
Successful Efforts to Combat Childhood Obesity**

*County's Community Health Report to focus on drop in childhood obesity among Redondo Beach students from 13.9% in 2009 to 6.4% in 2019 thanks to nutrition and exercise programs initiated in schools with help from BCHD*

Contact: Dan Smith (310) 374-3426, [Dan.Smith@bchd.org](mailto:Dan.Smith@bchd.org)

**REDONDO BEACH, Calif.** (June 22, 2020) – Redondo Beach Unified School District (RBUSD), after teaming with Beach Cities Health District (BCHD), has witnessed a dramatic drop in childhood obesity among its students following the implementation of nutrition and exercise programs that started in 2007. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) has taken notice and is publishing a Community Health Report detailing RBUSD's success and hoping to inspire other school districts to combat obesity and improve health among their students.

The report, titled "Recent Trends in Childhood Obesity Prevalence in the Redondo Beach Unified School District: A Case Study," notes data that showed one in five RBUSD elementary school students were obese – higher than the national average – leading BCHD to partner with RBUSD to launch the LiveWell Kids program in Redondo Beach schools in 2007. Since then, the results have been eye-opening— a dramatic drop in childhood obesity among Redondo Beach students (grades K-5th) from 13.9% in 2009 to 6.4% in 2019.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines obesity as "a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile," based on standardized growth charts. The CDC calls childhood obesity "a serious problem in the U.S., putting children and adolescents at risk for poor health."

"Obesity-related chronic diseases are among the leading causes of premature death in Los Angeles County, including coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, colorectal cancer and high blood pressure," said Paul Simon, M.D., M.P.H., Chief Science Officer for the LACDPH. "Stopping obesity among our young people is a critical step and these findings are particularly impressive because they were sustained and observed across all public elementary schools, grade levels and demographic groups."

"The predominantly positive results coincided with an intensive school-based wellness intervention (LiveWell Kids) and a community-wide wellness initiative (Blue Zones Project® by Healthways, now Sharecare)," said Simon. Both programs were introduced by BCHD. "While neither program was branded as an "obesity prevention" initiative, both included a strong focus on improving nutrition and increasing physical activity, which has clearly helped lower the childhood obesity rate in this area."

Further evidence of RBUSD’s success is that a similar decline in child obesity prevalence was not observed in neighboring cities or the county overall based on data from the California Physical Fitness Testing Program.

“For the past 10 years, RBUSD has been at the forefront of the ‘whole child’ movement. These numbers are a testament to our strong partnership with Beach Cities Health District, as their leadership and programs are key components of our success,” said Dr. Steven Keller, RBUSD Superintendent. “When we partnered with BCHD and instituted their LiveWell Kids program, we all had lofty goals. Staff, parents, kids, the board of education as well as BCHD have all contributed to a program that continues to exceed those goals.”

“Redondo Beach Unified was an early adopter of the concept of the ‘whole child’ – making sure each student has the opportunity to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged during their academic pursuits. Because of this, they were a willing partner to address childhood obesity,” said Tom Bakaly, BCHD CEO. “The LiveWell Kids program has been a success because RBUSD was open to all ideas to improve the health of their students. From the superintendent, to staff, to the thousands of program volunteers who have been involved, there has been true collaboration that’s made a big impact.”

“Several years later, our work with the Blue Zones Project specifically addressed the health needs of the adult population, utilizing permanent, evidence-based environmental and policy changes in schools, workplaces, restaurants, businesses and city governments. These changes have also positively impacted students by making the healthy choice the easy choice for residents of all ages in our community,” Bakaly said.

The analysis by LACDPH covered the period from the 2008-2009 school year to 2018-2019, using BMI data calculated for each RBUSD student based on their measured height and weight.

The LiveWell Kids curriculum is delivered in classrooms and school gardens by 500 trained parent docents. It blends in-class nutrition lessons, mindfulness practices and garden education to introduce and instill healthy habits at an early age. In addition to LiveWell Kids, BCHD supports nutrition and exercise in RBUSD schools through 8-Minute Morning Exercises, School Wellness Councils, Walking School Bus, Walking Wednesdays and Youth Bicycle and Pedestrian Education. International Walk to School Day, held the first Wednesday in October, saw 1,723 RBUSD students participate in 2019.

In spring 2020, as schools shifted to distance learning due to COVID-19, BCHD was able to adapt components of the LiveWell Kids program to a virtual format. Additionally, at-home exercise and mindfulness programs were also provided to families.

### **About Beach Cities Health District**

Beach Cities Health District is among the leading preventive health agencies in the nation and has served the communities of Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach and Redondo Beach since 1955. As a public agency, it offers an extensive range of dynamic health and wellness programs, with

innovative services and facilities to promote health and prevent diseases in every lifespan. BCHD also operates AdventurePlex, a health and fitness facility where kids play their way to good health, and the Center for Health & Fitness, a comprehensive fitness center that is the only Medical Fitness Association-certified facility in California. Visit [www.bchd.org](http://www.bchd.org) or call (310) 374-3426 for more information.

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