

Valley Voice: Valley health assessment a key resource

Quinton Egson, Special to The Desert Sun 11:34 a.m. PST January 27, 2016



(Photo: Marc Glassman/Courtesy photo)

Health Assessment and Research for Communities (HARC) has been a key resource for nonprofits in the Coachella Valley for many years. This 501(c)3 organization is a community partner who has worked in assisting many nonprofits throughout the valley to meet their goals.

The data that HARC provides is an integral part in developing strategic plans that help organizations, like the Boys & Girls Clubs of Coachella Valley (BGCoFCV), meet the various needs in our local communities.

The BGCoFCV uses HARC data to assist our organization in the development of successful programs that enhance the lives of youth throughout the Coachella Valley. Our measurement of effort is aimed at demonstrating our impact to stakeholders and uncovering ways to improve our services. By utilizing this research-based data, we can track our progress and evaluate our programs to make sure we stretch each dollar to make the best return on investment.

As a result of using HARC's data to identify the specific needs of Coachella Valley children and families, numerous BGCoFCV programs have been deemed successful.

HARC conducted an in-depth study (results listed below) proving positive impacts from BGCoFCV's Healthy Habits program to improving health knowledge and behavior of local youth. This data is just one example of how BGCoFCV has measured the successful impacts from its various programs and services, and how they have benefited local communities.

- 30 percent average increase in health knowledge
- 33 percent average rise in daily fruit consumption
- Average days per week with substantial exercise jumped from 4.4 to 5.2
- Physical fitness test scores improved an average of 10 percent

In addition to using HARC's resources to develop programs, the BGCoFCV has utilized key information provided by HARC to secure numerous grants. Listed below is compelling data from 2013, reflected in HARC's *Community Health Monitor Reports*, that has substantiated the need for services provided by the BGCoFCV, which has been used to secure the necessary funding to continue programs.

- Only 35.2 percent of Coachella Valley children exercised the recommended daily physical activity;
- Our valley had an overweight/obesity rate of 39.8 percent among children ages 2 to 17, twice the rate compared to California's 17 percent;
- Parents of male children were more likely to report their child's social and emotional health difficulties than parents of female children (34.8 percent to 21.1 percent);
- Approximately 6,073 Coachella Valley children had to cut the size of meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food;
- Approximately 701 Coachella Valley children went a day without eating because there was not enough money for food.

The work of HARC has allowed us to establish programs that develop measurable, life-changing results for our youth. By measuring outcomes, we are able to clearly explain our impact and continue to improve our services, so that we can make an even bigger difference for those we serve. We encourage our community to partake in HARC's survey in 2016 — your participation will provide the data that will enable us to continue to save and enhance the lives of the young people of the Coachella Valley.

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