

# The FORWARD Initiative

## Who We Are

FORWARD, Fighting Obesity Reaching healthy Weight Among Residents of DuPage, has grown from a small organized planning effort in August, 2008 to a county-wide leadership effort implemented in May, 2009. The goal of the FORWARD Initiative is to improve the health and wellbeing of the children and families in DuPage County, Illinois by reversing the obesity trend.

## The FORWARD Coalition

FORWARD works through an inclusive, diverse, informed coalition of passionate individuals, programs and agencies. The Coalition consists of healthcare providers, social service organizations, businesses, schools, daycare providers, the faith community, insurance companies, recreation and park districts, and other organizations and individuals interested in helping to create a healthier DuPage County.

## We Believe

- That every person in DuPage County should have access to and opportunities for healthy eating and active living in order to achieve a healthy weight and lifestyle.
- That the FORWARD Initiative will serve as a model and catalyst for improving the health, nutrition, wellness and physical activity for other municipalities across the United States by creating community-wide system, policy and environmental changes.
- Prevention and Treatment for childhood obesity for families in DuPage County must be coordinated.

## What We Know:

- Obesity across all demographic groups has reached epidemic proportions
- Nearly 1 in 3 children are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight nationwide
- At 34.9%, Illinois ranks 10th on the list of states with children age 10-17 who are overweight and obese (Trust for America's Health)
- Based on the information we have today:
  - The adult overweight and obesity rate for DuPage County is 56%
  - For youth between the age of 2-18, the rate is an average of 34%

## DuPage County Quick Facts

- Nearly 1 million residents
- Economic and ethnically diverse
  - While DuPage has the highest median income in the Chicago area, it has more low income persons than the total population of eighty counties in Illinois
  - The minority population has risen between 1990 and 2004 by 149.41%
  - The most significant population growth was in the Hispanic /Latino population
- More than 300 schools
- Home to more than 130 major corporations including 6 Fortune 1000 companies
- Nearly 235,000 children under the age of 18

## Together We Will:

- Engage community partners, including special opportunities for parents and businesses, to facilitate and sustain healthy changes in dietary and physical activity options and decisions for DuPage residents.
- Identify and measure relevant data to track county-wide obesity trends to inform and lead DuPage County in obesity prevention and healthy lifestyle efforts.
- Promote the exchange of county-wide information and linkages to improve healthy eating and active living for residents including regular meeting and events, a robust website and educational toolkits.
- Advocate through policy, environmental and system changes for increased access to healthy nutrition and physical activity options for children and families.

## FORWARD Advisory Board

The FORWARD Initiative is led by a group of diverse and influential leaders in the DuPage Community, each with an expertise, interest and history of work in health, nutrition, education, physical activity, disparities, and wellness.

**Data and Research:** Identify relevant data and measures and the mechanisms, means and timelines that will be employed in order to inform and direct the FORWARD Initiative. Create a baseline and then measure the impact and progress of the FORWARD effort on childhood obesity rates in DuPage County over time. The data committee will create a snapshot and a profile of childhood obesity status in DuPage in addition to collecting data to understand the scope of the problem in DuPage.

**Marketing and Communications:** Oversee and develop documents, tools, and plans regarding the marketing, promotion and external communication. Toolkits for schools, healthcare practitioners and even families will be developed.

**Resource and Partnership Building:** identify and linking passionate, engaged and like-minded individuals, programs and agencies in order to promote the exchange of information and opportunities between these entities, including the children and families of DuPage County. An electronic resource inventory will be built and maintained. Two areas of specific partnership include the FORWARD Corporate Council and the Parent and Student Advisory Group.

## Get Involved:

Contact Us at 630-682-7979 ext 7037 or [forward@dupagehealth.org](mailto:forward@dupagehealth.org)

Visit our Website at: [www.forwarddupage.org](http://www.forwarddupage.org)

