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**THE ORGANWISE GUYS®**  
Comprehensive School Program



## **The OrganWise Guys Comprehensive School Program (OWG CSP) Obesity Prevention Laboratory Model Overview**

The OrganWise Guys Comprehensive School Program (OWG CSP) is a multi-media, dynamic, interactive, cross-curricular program that uses fun characters based on the organs of the body (such as Hardy Heart; Peri Stolic, the large intestine; and Sir Rebrum, the brain), coupled with high energy activities, to teach children how to make positive health, nutrition, and physical activity choices. The OWG CSP thematically integrates an evidence-based set of interventions including nutrition and healthy lifestyle educational curricula focusing on core principles of healthy living (high fiber, low fat, lots of water, exercise) and eating (nutrient-dense foods), nutritious dietary offerings in school cafeterias (and other feeding institutions, particularly those that participate in the USDA feeding and nutrition education programs) that model classroom-based and parent nutrition education programming, increased daily physical activity and other school-based projects, in a proven-effective manner. Using a collaborative approach that engages schools, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition education programs, University/County Extension, Area Health Education Centers, and other community-based organizations and programs, OWG CSP engages schools as “laboratories of obesity prevention” through community-wide efforts (1).

### **An Evidence-Based Model**

OWG CSP is based on a four-year quasi-experimental study which showed statistically significant improvements in program children’s weight, blood pressure, and waist circumference measures, as well as significantly higher average standardized test scores, as compared to outcomes of children in non-program schools (1-8). Evaluation data also show that parents increasingly are engaged with their children’s nutrition and healthy food choices as a result of the nutrition education resources provided through the schools (9).

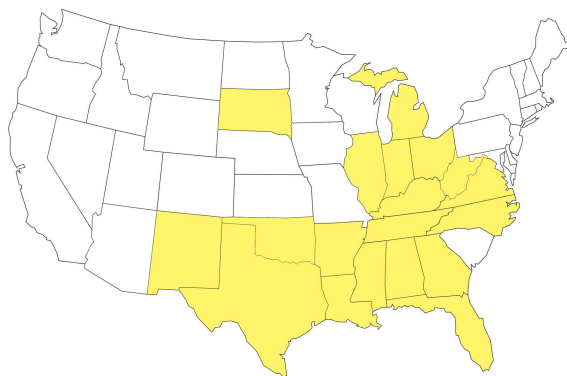
### **Sustainability of Programming through Strategic Partnerships**

The ultimate outcome of a successful obesity prevention intervention is the ability to improve health outcomes in a manner that is cost-effective and sustainable. During the past several years, OWG programming has been a successful tool for creating sustainable partnerships for nutrition education and health improvement, especially among land-grant University Cooperative Extension Agencies, as well as other health-oriented entities and the communities they serve. In so doing, *obesity prevention laboratories* evolve naturally as collaboratives develop. Partners may provide expertise during education activities, host food tastings, conduct school assemblies, and provide other valuable resources to support sustainability. Likely the most widely used model involves the collaboration of Cooperative Extension Universities, which administer the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed), with schools and other community-based groups. SNAP-Ed programming allows university partners and other entities serving low-income audiences, to use non-federal resources to leverage federal matching dollars when using science-based nutrition education programming as part of their statewide nutrition education plan.

Through SNAP-Ed collaboration, nutrition educators train teachers on grade-specific materials, with the aim that teachers conduct nutrition lessons daily as part of their regular lessons. Nutrition instruction by teachers results in federal match funding to further nutrition education efforts, and thus provides strong mechanisms for sustained nutrition and health education programming. The OWG CSP is an example of such a program being used in many states as part of their SNAP-Ed state plans, as described in the box to the right. Below, we describe a few models for SNAP-Ed program implementation that address childhood obesity prevention.

### Expansion of the Model

As shown on the following map, many states currently use OWG CSP as part of their SNAP-Ed programming. In addition to state-by-state adoption of the OWG CSP SNAP-Ed model, USDA Regions are showing interest in coordinating this work, particularly the Southwest, Southeast, and Midwest Regions.



### University Extension-Department of Education Collaboration

#### Example: Florida

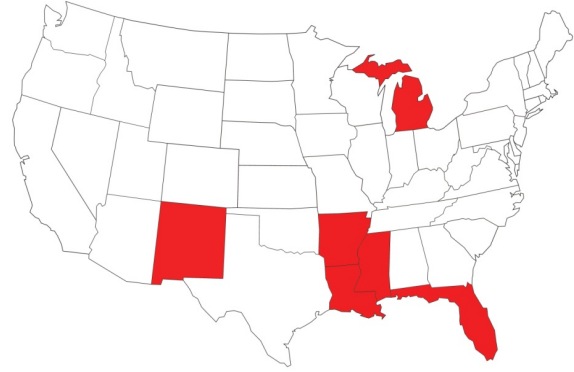
The Florida Department of Education/Office of Food and Nutrition Management and Healthy Schools purchased the OWG Core Kit for 187 schools. To enhance nutrition education in these schools, they partnered with University of Florida (UF) Extension which included nutrition education support for these schools into their annual 2009-2010 SNAP plan that allows them to acquire federal match funding to support ongoing nutrition outreach. In addition, a grant from the Blue Foundation for a Healthier Florida (the philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida) supports the OWG Foods of the Month nutrient-dense curriculum to those schools with at least 50 percent of children qualifying for Free and Reduced Priced Meals under the USDA National School Lunch Program. Commencement of this project began in fall 2009 when UF Extension Agents in five counties were trained to implement the program. The Agents then trained teachers in their counties on how to use the OWG materials. The amount of time each teacher uses the materials with their children will be tracked and reported back to UF Extension. UF Extension will use their match funds to provide OWG activity books to participating schools as well as to expand and support nutrition education for their intended audience. These activities result in the sustainability of programming as classroom teachers generate additional, substantial match funding for future work. Extension Agents also meet with foodservice personnel to integrate SNAP-Ed nutrition education activities with nutrition and feeding efforts of foodservice staff with the aim to have seamless, fun programming throughout participating schools. Partnerships with local community-based nonprofit and for-profit organizations, such as 8 Publix Supermarkets in Brevard County, FL, are helping create sustainable obesity prevention laboratories throughout FL as this program rolls out statewide

In many instances, public-private funding opportunities galvanize this model's implementation. The ongoing success of the expansion of the model is due to several recent funding opportunities that provide additional, substantial leveraging of USDA SNAP resources. Two of the most notable are (1) the W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant and (2) Blue Cross Blue Shield Program Funding.

(1) In January 2009, the Mississippi Food Network, a food bank system headquartered in Jackson, MS, received a \$2 million grant from WKKF to address childhood obesity prevention in six states with large numbers of overweight children – MS, AR, FL, LA, MI and NM (see map below). The project, called Healthy Options for People through Extension Expansion Program 2 (HOPE2), is being implemented in 72 elementary schools where more than 50 percent of the children qualify for Free and Reduced Price Meals under the (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Led by land-grant Extension Universities and their local County Agents working in elementary schools, HOPE2 provides the opportunity for these schools and surrounding communities to participate in the OWG CSP evidence-based wellness initiative and is intended to create healthy school environments that reach into the community to address obesity prevention. The creation of obesity prevention laboratories through HOPE2 includes partners such as local

grocery stores and produce providers, community health centers, physician offices, Women, Infants, and Children clinics, Head Start programs, faith-based institutions, food banks, and other institutions that educate and serve children and families.

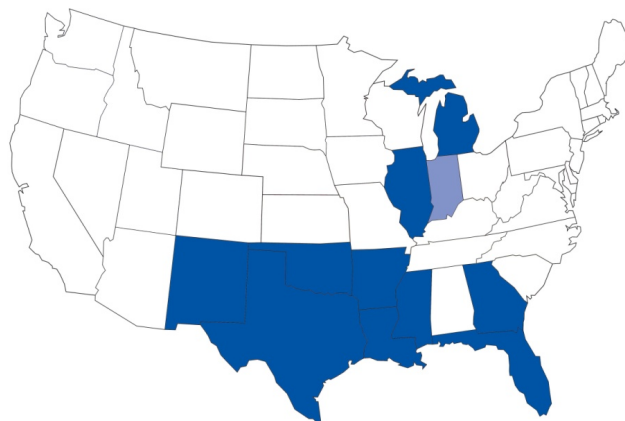
In 2007, WKKF and the Oliver Foundation (Houston, TX) funded a collaborative grant to expand OWG programming nationally. This expansion grant provided for the distribution of 125 OWG Core Kits to elementary schools via a *Call for Proposals* process whereby a school team, including principals, teachers, and students, completed an application for the kit. The proposals included a plan for how the kit would assist them in strengthening their school's wellness initiatives and policies. As part of the proposal review process, a group of students, called the Oliver Foundation's Teen Advisory Board (TAB) – Youth Excited About Health (YEAH!), were invited to take active roles as “reviewers.” All 15 TAB members took their jobs seriously and provided specific information that assisted the grant selection team in selecting the recipients, while at the same time, gained experiences and skills needed for success in college, such as time management, analyzing information, and providing concise feedback. Active youth involvement was a huge asset to this project, which led to funding nutrition and healthy living programming in 125 schools throughout the United States.



Another aspect of this grant involved the development of 30 and 60-second vignettes (*The OrganWise Guys Shorts!*), essentially public service announcement (PSA)-types of videos, on topics such as eating well, exercise, bone health, drinking water, gardening, no smoking, limiting TV, eating breakfast, food safety, healthy snacking/portions, hand washing, etc. These vignettes have been shown to be useful in providing important health and wellness messages, in multiple venues, such as classrooms, school television, after-school sites, community health clinics and doctors' offices, and are to be tested soon in grocery stores. Recently, American Public Television began free distribution of the *Shorts!* to public television stations nationwide. Thus, the PSAs assist in creating “obesity prevention laboratories” as messages are available in many locations where people seek services and/or products. Currently, discussions are in the works for another round of national dissemination of OWG CSP materials using this locally-driven model to replicate the very successful partnerships, and linkages to SNAP-Ed programming, developed during the WKKF-Oliver Foundation grant period.

(2) Because of the improvements in body mass index (BMI) and nutrition behavior change after HOPE implementation, Louisiana State University (LSU) AgCenter received a 5-year, \$1.8 million grant from the BlueCross and BlueShield (BCBS) of Louisiana Foundation to continue OWG programming (in their signature program entitled *Smart Bodies*). This led other “Blues” to fund OWG projects in a variety of models because of the keen interest the health insurance industry has in keeping their insured at a healthy weight. For example, Mississippi State University received multi-year funding support from the BCBS Foundation of Mississippi, to increase the reach of OWG programming in their state. In Georgia, the Wellpoint Foundation (BCBS of GA) funded a 3-year OWG project that helped re-establish USDA SNAP-Ed programming in GA, which supports sustainability of that project. And in Michigan, BCBS of Michigan uses a grant application process whereby schools apply for the OWG CSP. Implementation includes cultivating relationships between grant recipients and their local extension agents to begin the SNAP-Ed program in their communities, and linkages to other nutrition- and health-supporting local institutions. In another model, Health Care Services Corporation (HCSC), the parent company of four states' BCBS organizations (TX, NM, OK, IL), is funding a 500-school, five-year rollout of the OWG CSP model as part of their strategic mission to improve the health of their communities as well as their members. Collaboration among schools, University Extension (SNAP-Ed) and community-based partners is central to this model. HCSC recently was honored as a finalist of the US Chamber of Commerce's 2009 Corporate Citizenship Award for its work addressing childhood obesity through its OrganWise Guys Community Outreach Program.

In the map to the right, the dark blue states indicate locations where the SNAP-Ed/University Extension operates in partnership with various BCBS organizations. The light blue state is one where a partnership is currently developing. Indeed, the model has vast potential for spreading to other BCBS entities nationwide as each one sees the tremendous leveraging and sustainability mechanisms inherent in the model, as well as the opportunities to keep their members healthy.



In addition to the large-scale projects just described, OWG CSP is being implemented in many locations throughout the United States led by local agencies. In all of the states highlighted in the map to the left, relationships with state land-grant universities are being cultivated by local implementation leaders to leverage their work with USDA SNAP-Ed programming for long-term sustainability.

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