

Aetna Foundation's Regional Grant

The Aetna Foundation's Regional Grants fund community wellness initiatives that serve those who are most at risk for poor health -- low-income, underserved or minority populations. A healthy diet and regular exercise can help prevent obesity and many chronic conditions. That's why we focus on efforts that promote eating fresh fruits and vegetables and being active.

Grants will target communities where healthy food can be difficult to buy, and where social and environmental factors may limit people's ability to be physically active.

Our 2013 Regional Grants will focus on:

- Healthy food choices - Programs that provide nutrition education and help increase the availability of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved communities
- Healthy activity - Programs that provide opportunities for physical activity in underserved communities

Types of projects we seek to support include:

- School-based or after-school nutrition and fitness programs that help children learn healthy habits at an early age
- Community-based nutrition education programs for children and families
- Efforts to increase the availability or affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables in communities
- Community gardening and urban farming activities for children and families

Applications that focus on healthy food choices and physical activity through a racial and ethnic health equity lens will receive priority consideration.

Funding limits:

We will consider proposals seeking \$25,000 - \$40,000.

Source:

Aetna Inc. (<http://www.aetna-foundation.org/foundation/apply-for-a-grant/>)

Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School's Project Summary for Aetna Foundation's Regional Grant

The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project seeks to harness and build upon the power of existing community resources to help students and residents of neighborhoods in southeast Atlanta, Georgia to gain access to:

1. Sustained and supportive opportunities to be physically active
2. Education about healthy food choices and fresh, local fruits and vegetables

These goals of The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project are particularly important given the problems of childhood obesity in the state of Georgia. Statistics cited by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta indicates that 40% of young people in the state are overweight or obese, the second highest rate of any state in the country. This problem is compounded by the fact that nearly 75% of adults in Georgia do not recognize the problems of childhood obesity.

The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project seeks to address this problem with a holistic set of activities aimed at increasing education and access to healthy food and healthy activities centered at the middle school campus of the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS) in southeast Atlanta. The school is a Title I school based on the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals, and by situating The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project at ANCS's middle school campus, The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project can help to meet the needs of an underserved student population and also impact the broader community around the school, one that is of mixed income based on 2010 U.S. Census data.

The activities of The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project include the following:

Physical Fitness Activities

For The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project, ANCS has partnered with FitWit, a local organization whose mission is to "create fitness camp communities that inspire and empower individuals of all fitness levels to be fit and healthy for life." For ANCS students, The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project will make available access to the "FitWit Club" after school one-two days each week. The FitWit Club builds strength and develops character for young people. Meeting throughout the entire school year, FitWit builds a community that empowers participants to believe in themselves and strive for success every day.

FitWit Club provides:

- Workouts led by FitWit trainers and other fitness experts in yoga, kickboxing, dance, etc.
- Monthly nutrition education

- Student training journal and fitness resource guide
- Personal development retreats
- Opportunities for volunteer hours by bringing fitness to your community
- Leadership opportunities as Club Officers and Student Fitness Trainers
- Opportunities to participate AND lead school-wide fitness campaigns throughout the year.
- Interdisciplinary participation with core academic standards in Math, English, and Physical Education classes
- Incentives for effort, leadership, and participation

An ANCS teacher will work in conjunction with a FitWit trainer to lead the club. In order to target those students with the greatest need, the FitWit Club will be made available at no cost to students who qualify for free or reduced price meals according to federal eligibility guidelines. Other students may participate in the FitWit Club for a small fee. By promoting and providing access to physical fitness activities with a program with proven results, The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project will help to address one of the main contributors to the problem of childhood obesity.

In addition to ANCS students, parents and other adults in the southeast Atlanta community will be served by The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project through the ANCS-FitWit partnership. FitWit also runs adult fitness camps around the Atlanta area, and the ANCS middle school campus will serve as a site for a FitWit camp. At the ANCS FitWit camp, parents of ANCS students who qualify for free or reduced price meals according to federal eligibility guidelines will be able to participate at no cost. Parents of students who do not qualify for free or reduced price meals and/or residents of the Ormewood Park and Grant Park neighborhoods surrounding the school may participate in the FitWit camp at a reduced cost of the typical FitWit camp membership.

By involving both students and adults in The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project, we will help to establish a community of support to initiate and sustain involvement with physical activity so as to impact the availability of such activities in an underserved area.

Healthy Food Choices

The ANCS middle school campus is already home to a unique “urban farm” tended to by a skilled farmer and ANCS students. Through the support of an Aetna Grant, the impact of the farm activities can be broadened in order to develop a better understanding of healthy food choices and to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in the school and community.

For The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project, ANCS will use the school resources created by the Georgia Organics organization. Georgia Organics promotes sustainable foods and local farms in Georgia through community-based food systems. The organization provides a variety of grower education and outreach programs, and ANCS will use these programs in a school-based nutrition education and urban farming initiative centered in the school's urban farm.

First, students at the school will engage in nutrition education activities in their health class using the resources of the school's farm and "farm-to-school" lesson plans developed by Georgia Organics. These activities will be aimed at helping students to better understand different healthy food options.

As well, through their class, students will have the opportunity to work with the community farmer to plan, tend to, and harvest the school's farm. Portions of the harvest from the school's farm will be used in the school's own meal program to supplement with local, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Additionally, The Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life Project will work with the local Grant Park Farmers Market (GPFM) near the middle school campus. The GPFM has as its mission to "create a vibrant and healthy community space while providing access to – and education about – nutritious food and wellness". Students and the community farmer at the school will make portions of the farm's harvest available to be sold at a reduced cost at GPFM, thereby increasing the availability and affordability of fresh produce in the area. Students will also work with the farmer to organize and teach a monthly urban farming class to neighborhood residents at the GPFM at no cost.

Taken together, the activities of the Southeast Atlanta Fit for Life project will help to make physical activity and healthy food choices available to those who most need them and with broad impact on the problems of childhood obesity and access to education about fitness and nutrition.

**Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School's Current and Tentative Plans
For Use of Aetna Foundation's Regional Grant of \$30,000**

Physical Fitness Activities

A student FitWit Club will begin at the middle campus of the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS) with a two-week intensive starting January 27, 2014. This intensive will be a time for the students in the group to build community as a group as well as demonstrate their commitment to the FitWit Club.

The FitWit Club will meet on either Mondays or Tuesdays starting the week of February 10, 2014, from 4-5 pm at the middle campus. The group will be lead by Andrew Ross, ANCS Fit for Life Teacher, and other FitWit trainers/personnel.

Since the Aetna Grant runs from January –December 2014, there will be a second two-week intensive at the start of the 2014-2015 school year to meet the same objectives mentioned above for a new FitWit Club for that school year. Additional funds that maybe necessary to finish out the school year will be addressed at a later point once the program has had more time to develop.

The adult FitWit fitness camps are still in development. Depending upon the interest from the parents and community, either a FitWit camp will be offered on-site at the middle campus or at alternate locations where other adult FitWit camps meet.

Funds will be used to support personnel costs, printing of FitWit Club manuals, and promotional materials.

Healthy Food Choices

At the middle campus, students are placed into various Academic Growth Period (AGP) courses for each term. Students are primarily placed in these courses based on screener tests (STAR Math, STAR Reader, etc.) as well as other assessment data provided by teachers. An AGP course is currently being designed that would focus on urban farming and nutrition education. Learning opportunities would reinforce math, science, and health curriculum standards. This course would be taught/facilitated by both Andrew Ross, ANCS Fit for Life Teacher, and Miles Rapiere, ANCS Farmer.

Food harvested from the ANCS farm will be used in various ways to include but not be limited to:

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) type boxes for ANCS families
- School cafeteria
- Fit for Life classrooms (nutrition unit)

- School events (e.g. Parent Coffee)
- Grant Park Farmer's Market sales

This is all tentative based on the harvest volume and greatest need/use of food.

Educational materials provided by Georgia Organics will be used to supplement the Fit for Life nutrition units as well as teach nutrition sessions at the Grant Park Farmer's Market.

Funds will be used to support personnel costs, urban farming materials and supplies, promotional materials, materials for nutrition education sessions at Grant Park Farmer's Market, and transportation costs.