

## Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) presents POD Results at Smart Start Conference

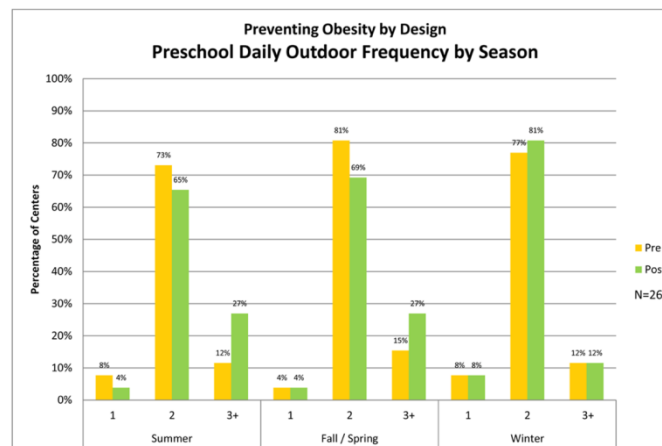
NLI staff Dr. Nilda Cosco, Education Specialist, and Michele Rivest, Project Associate, presented at the 2012 Smart Start Conference on the findings from the Preventing Obesity by Design (POD) project. POD focused on how the outdoor built environment can promote children's healthy development and served as a precursor to Shape NC. From 2008-2011, NLI worked with 10 Local Partnerships for Children and 27 childcare centers across the state to redesign and naturalize their outdoor learning environments.

NLI research showed that all POD centers offer healthier outdoor environments.

- 68% of the POD centers reported improvement and positive change in the behavior of their children.
- 40% reported that the creation of new gardens and/or edible fruiting plants was one of their greatest successes.

Using *behavior mapping*, a research method that links children's physical activity and outdoor environmental attributes, NLI researchers documented that children were more active after the center had renovated its outdoor environment. Further, teachers were observed to be less involved in custodial care as the children became more active.

Baseline surveys conducted with all of the POD centers (N = 27) showed that preschool children spent more time outdoors in all seasons after renovation as shown in the chart below. This finding is significant because previous research shows that time outdoors is the strongest correlate of physical activity (Sallis et. al, 1993).



Creating naturalized outdoor learning environments is a preventive health intervention and an effective antidote to childhood obesity. For more information on POD, visit the NLI website or contact NLI staff.

<http://www.naturalearning.org/content/preventing-obesity-design-pod>

*Submitted by Dr. Nilda Cosco and Michele Rivest, Natural Learning Initiative*

## Substituting Sedentary Activities with Active Play

Shape NC in Buncombe County is reaching out to community members who offer programs that impact children ages 0-5, but are not in child care. Shape NC team members met with lead staff in the children's services branch of the Buncombe County Library System to discuss adding more moderate-vigorous activity in story time. Some of the ideas included games from the book, *Active Play!* by Dianne Craft, which use inexpensive items such as socks rolled up into balls and hula hoops. The following email from Jesse Figuera, the Preschool Outreach Program coordinator, is a perfect example of how our work can enhance existing programs, as well as impact single families with young children.

*On Friday nights my kids get way excited because I let them eat dinner on the floor and watch a cartoon "show" before bed. Last Friday night, instead of watching a show, we played with socks. We balled up all our kid socks and they threw them back and forth and into baskets and onto a blue sheet ("a river"-Vera's idea, not mine...you had to swim through it to retrieve them) and danced to Aretha Franklin for almost 45 minutes straight. They were laughing and moving and running so hard...neither one even remembered to ask about the cartoon portion of the usually sacred Friday night ritual. It was wonderful and so silly and easy and healthy and fun and all of that. Thanks!*

This story is so inspirational, and reminds us that our conversations and work can and should impact individual families and children. Thank you Jesse for sharing!

*Story submitted by Ariel Ashe, Hub Specialist, Buncombe County Partnership*

## North Carolina IOM Task Force on Early Childhood Obesity Prevention

The North Carolina Institute of Medicine Task Force met again on May 18<sup>th</sup> in Morrisville, NC. This was the fifth meeting of the Community Group and the ninth meeting overall since its start in September 2011. The main topic of the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting was faith communities. The meeting started out with an overview of the **Eat Smart Move More Movement** in North Carolina by Dr. David Garner from the NC Center for Health & Wellness at the University of North Carolina – Asheville. Dr. Annie Hardison-Moody, Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences at North Carolina State University, followed with an overview and discussion of the **Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More** program. Although this program was geared mainly toward the entire faith community, there were good discussions about the connection with faith based child care/preschool programs. Willona Stallings from the NC Council of Churches provided an overview of the **Partners in Health and Wholeness** (PHW) program. Discussion focused on available resources and the PHW Certification Program. After the presentations, the task force engaged in open dialogue about barriers and strategies related to the faith based community and its connection with early childhood. For more information on the information provided above please visit:

<http://www.nciom.org/task-forces-and-projects/?ecop>

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/>

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/FaithfulFamilies/FaithfulFamilies.html>

<http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org/programs/health-wholeness/>

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Shape NC will continue to issue newsletters to keep you posted on the happenings with Shape NC and current news and resources regarding physical activity, dietary practices, and outdoor learning environments in childcare.

Please share your successes and/or challenges with improving the health of young children by contacting:

[meredith@beactivenc.org](mailto:meredith@beactivenc.org) or (919)287-7012.