Message from Susan Towler, Vice President

Many of us use evaluation in our daily lives, reviewing which summer camp to send our children, deciding which restaurant to visit or which stove to purchase, for example. Evaluation at its most basic level is the use of information to make decisions. At a program/initiative level, metrics and evaluation are used to gather the information needed to give us the best information and feedback about what is working and what needs to be changed. It also answers questions about trends, is it working, is it making a difference and is the funder receiving the desired benefits for the intended investment. Including evaluation as a component of an initiative is also considered a best practice in philanthropy. Basically, we want to know, “So what?”

In 2008 the Florida Blue Foundation Board of Directors approved the funding for the development of an evidence-based initiative entitled Embrace a Healthy Florida, a statewide initiative designed to address the causes and prevention of childhood obesity. The initiative is a Florida-based, cross-sector, community collaboration that is driven through community engagement to make long-term changes in the health of children and families. The funding for this initiative is scheduled to end in 2015.

Six diverse communities – Hialeah and Opa-locka in Miami-Dade County, Jacksonville, Parramore in Orange County, Sulphur Springs in Hillsborough County and Tallahassee – are actively engaged and are building coalitions and partnerships to make positive changes in healthy choices and active living in these communities.
The Embrace a Healthy Florida initiative has metrics and evaluation woven throughout. The metrics and evaluation are established against a set of seven (7) success factors. In the evaluation summary below, it will show the success factors and how the initiative is trending against the established activities and programs that are in support of the seven success factors.

We encourage you to use metrics and evaluation in your work.

Evaluation of the Embrace a Healthy Florida Initiative

Embrace a Healthy Florida, addressing the causes and prevention of childhood obesity, operates in six communities across Florida – Hialeah, Jacksonville, Opa-locka, Orlando/Parramore, Sulphur Springs/Tampa, and Tallahassee. It is an evidence-based, Florida-based, multi-sector, community initiative that uses community engagement to make long-term, positive changes in childhood and family health.

The initiative and its evaluation were designed around seven success factors that serve as the framework and cornerstone of the initiative. They are:

I. Increased targeted interventions with at-risk communities and low-income children

II. Increased access to healthy foods

III. Increased changes in parenting and families

IV. Increased changes in child care or school settings

V. Increased policy changes as it relates to the environment

VI. Increased marketing and advertising practices

VII. Increased health care providers and systems

In documenting the results and impacts of the initiative, evaluation has played a key role in understanding how each community is addressing childhood obesity within their unique and diverse community. Each community reports against the seven success factors by documenting the activities to engage children, parents, families and key stakeholders; reporting the challenges that they face; and identifying opportunities for partnership and collaboration to address the seven success factors.

Evaluation is an iterative process. Throughout the life of the initiative, we are continually evaluating the data that's collected to determine if we are on target with the seven success factors. We want to know if the Foundation’s investment is making a positive difference in the health and well-being of children, families and the communities. We ask: what's different in the communities, what are the impacts, what stories can we tell, and what quantifiable information should be gathered.

From the data gathered during the two reporting periods, we see that six of the seven success factors are trending upward (see Figure 1 below).
Because the data is not static, and builds upon the previous reports, the charts will not be stagnant. Future reports will also show upward trending as the communities continue to engage children, families and stakeholders in addressing the causes and prevention of childhood obesity.

The evaluation is being conducted by the Florida Blue Foundation in partnership with MGT of America, a national management consulting and research firm, headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida.

Figure 1 below is an example of a cumulative summary of data across the six communities by the seven success factors for the reporting periods from April-June 2012 and July-October 2012.

Figure 1

Click here to view a larger image of Figure 1

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT - 2012 Corporate Social Responsibility Report

We are pleased to present the 2012 Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the Florida Blue Foundation, "A Leading Innovator: Enabling Healthy Communities." The report details our five focus areas and shares information and select stories about those served by the nonprofits that received financial assistance through our programs. We hope you will be moved by the stories.