



Success Stories

Mother/Daughter Team Uses “fit-Care” to Instill Healthy Childhood Lifestyle Habits

Julie Wilhelmsen leads a group of children dancing to a CD; they laugh and sing as they move their bodies to the music. Without even knowing it, the children are learning good habits that will last them a lifetime and hopefully prevent childhood obesity. This is one of the goals of the *fit-Care* Program.

The *fit-Care* Program started in the summer of 2011, the curriculum was developed by Sanford Health to give caregivers knowledge and tools to provide an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle for the children in their care. The *fit-Care* program focuses on four domains - Recharge, Mood, Move and Food, each a piece of a puzzle. The *fit* concept is a holistic approach to living a healthy lifestyle, *fit* understands how these pieces impact each other to affect one's health and wellness. Caregivers attend classes to gain understanding of the *fit* principles and how to apply them in their own programs. They conduct a self-assessment to gauge how well they are already doing and to see where there are opportunities for growth. They can choose to participate in the *fit-Care* Best Practice Program where they set a goal on one of the *fit* domains and are assisted in the process by a *fit-Care* coach.

Julie and her mother, Barb Neuharth, run Lil Tot Stop in Baltic, SD. Both have attended the *fit-Care* training and taken part in the *fit-Care* Best Practice Program. Barb and Julie both set goals to work on in the Best Practice program, Barb focused more on the Recharge domain and Julie explored the Food and Move domains. They not only made changes to their schedule such as including movement daily but also added new policies to their parent handbook and sent home information to educate parents about the *fit* principles. Even though they've been in childcare for many years, they said they learned a lot through the *fit-Care* program. Barb says, “*fit-Care* has made me more aware of portion sizes. With childhood obesity happening with children younger and younger, it's important to think about what the correct portion sizes are so children don't overeat.”

Caregivers, like Barb and Julie, play an important role in helping children learn healthy lifestyle habits. They can teach the children, educate the parents, and be a good example for all by practicing healthy habits themselves. The *fit-Care* Program has given them tools to do just that.