

On Tuesday, May 18th the YMCA of Coastal Georgia awarded its first mini-grant, focused on promoting healthier communities in the greater Savannah area, to the Savannah Urban Garden Alliance (SUGA). One of several mini grants to be awarded by the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, SUGA was selected first for its innovative idea to encourage healthy eating by helping people in the city of Savannah grow their own fruits and vegetables. SUGA allows people in Savannah to have a plot of land to grow their own fresh produce in an area where many residents do not have access.



“They’re here in the heart of Savannah in areas where there are not a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables available to many residents, and just that fact alone contributes so heavily to obesity” said Joel Smoker Vice President of Operations for the YMCA of Coastal Georgia. Kelly Lockamy with SUGA said “Community gardening can address many of the problems that poor nutrition and lack of physical activity bring to our urban, suburban and school populations. When people are engaged in growing their own produce, they tend to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables than if they have to purchase them in a grocery store. Tending a garden affords fresh air, exercise, and in a community garden setting, satisfying social engagement.”

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia was one of the 16 original associations to be chosen to initiate a new program called Pioneering Healthy Communities (PHC). Working with the City of Savannah, Chatham County, Savannah Chatham County Schools, The Department of Public Health and others to get this program moving in our community, the YMCA of Coastal Georgia has used funds from this initiative to fund off-shoot programs of the Healthy Savannah 2012 program. With additional funds available the YMCA of Coastal Georgia has now begun to award mini-grants to community groups to get them started on programs to better the area and get kids and others up and moving toward a healthier way of life.

“This isn’t about the Y offering a new program. Rather, this is about sustainable change and making the healthy choice the easy choice” Smoker said.

In April 2010 the YMCA of Coastal Georgia launched its new mini-grant program focused on promoting healthier communities in the greater Savannah area. This program, funded by the YMCA’s Pioneering Healthy Communities partnership, provides funding for proposals that result in sustainable environmental and/ or policy change which promote physical activity or improved nutrition.

“Every day we hear about the negative impacts of poor nutrition and inactivity. Obesity is reaching epidemic proportions and can be directly traced to so many medical conditions. With



over two thousand YMCA’s across the country, each one of them working with thousands of volunteers, our organization has the far reaching ability to change the tide.” And the YMCA of Coastal Georgia is hoping to do just that. With the launch of this new mini grant program along with the other Pioneering Healthy Communities initiatives they are off to a great start and on their way to a healthier Savannah!