

## Affordable Exercise Opportunities Improve the Health and Fitness of Inner-City Residents

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*Background:* Physically Active Residential Communities and Schools (PARCS) is an 11-year old community-based exercise program in inner-city Indianapolis. Staffed by 200 undergraduate students who provide health/fitness assessments and exercise leadership for academic credit, PARCS offers exercise opportunities where none existed. *Purpose:* We present member demographic, baseline and outcome health/fitness data after one month of joining. *Methods:* Members (N = 113) who joined between February and May 2012 and received a one month follow-up assessment are included. Cost was \$20/year or free with a medical referral. Members signed a consent form, completed health and demographic questionnaires, and were evaluated for upper-body (UBS), lower-body (LBS) strength and endurance, cardiovascular fitness (CVF), body mass index (BMI), resting heart rate (RHR), systolic and diastolic blood pressure (SBP and DBP). One-month follow-up assessments were encouraged but not required. Attendance and health metrics were logged. Analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics. *Results:* Members were  $48.75 \pm 14.64$  years old, 46.25% Black, 45.99% White, 5.43% Hispanic, and 2.33% multiracial/other. Data showed 11.95% did not attend or complete high school, 23.9% obtained a diploma or GED, 32.57% obtained a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and 65.78% earned <\$40,000/year. Average attendance was 2.90 times/month. Baseline vs. follow-up measures showed an improvement in UBS ( $113 \pm 20.08$  vs.  $115 \pm 5.98$ , arm curls/30 sec,  $p < 0.001$ ), LBS ( $14.03 \pm 5.19$  vs.  $15.54 \pm 5.14$ ,  $p < 0.001$  chair stands/ 30 sec), CVF ( $85.02 \pm 24.42$  vs.  $95.35 \pm 28.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , steps/2 min), RHR ( $76.92 \pm 13.28$  vs.  $73.10 \pm 13.28$ , beats/min,  $p < 0.001$ ), SBP ( $127.03 \pm 14.00$  vs.  $122.87 \pm 11.62$  mmHg,  $p < 0.001$ ), and DBP ( $78.74 \pm 10.13$  vs.  $75.39 \pm 9.55$  mmHg,  $p < 0.001$ ). BMI ( $34.77 \pm 10.76$  vs.  $34.33 \pm 10.47$ ) was maintained. *Conclusion:* Members were able to exercise enough to improve or maintain health/fitness outcomes suggesting affordable and accessible exercise programs could benefit community health.

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