The Challenge: Obesity in pregnancy, excess gestational weight gain and postpartum weight retention are associated with severe, long-term adverse health outcomes for women and their children. Obesity has a disproportionate impact on low-income, minority women in Wisconsin. The South Madison Redevelopment District, home to the most racially diverse population in Dane County, faces such income and health disparities. Community initiatives that promote healthy weight before, during and after pregnancy can decrease tremendous health burdens.

Project Goal: The YMCA and UW School of Medicine and Public Health Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology partnership aimed to assess needs of underserved women in South Madison, evaluate community readiness and design pilot programs aimed at promoting healthy weight for low-income women before, during and after pregnancy.

Results: The project assessed current needs in the South Madison area and found a gap in services related to prenatal and postpartum programming. Community members cited numerous barriers that kept them from using existing programs (see Figure 1). Also, the vast majority of participants had difficulty identifying existing resources in the community for women who were pregnant, planning pregnancy or post partum. Among community members who identified specific programs, there was more awareness of weight management and fitness programs than nutrition programs.

This project was successful in forming many collaborations, beginning with the Prenatal to One Working group (POWr). It brought together and solidified invested partnerships with community members, community partners and academic partners.

Moving forward, the project plans to pursue programming that includes prenatal and postpartum fitness classes developed and offered in collaboration with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the YMCA of Dane County in the South Madison area.

Promoting Healthy Weight Before, During and After Pregnancy

Grantee: YMCA
Grant Title: YMCA and UW OBGYN Partnership Promoting Healthy Weight in Pregnancy
Geographic Location: City of Madison
Academic Partner: Cynthie Anderson, MD, MPH, UW School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Dates: 5/1/2013–08/30/2015
Amount: $24,132
Program: Community Academic Partnership Fund

Figure 1. South Madison women identified the above barriers to utilizing local prenatal and postpartum services.