

Better health is child's play.

A partnership between UnitedHealthcare Community Plan and Playworks is helping to improve the health and school performance of children in Arizona.

When you ask Joe Gaudio, CEO of UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Arizona, what he loves about Playworks, the list is long. But the first item is easy to remember. "It's the smiles," he said. "When I first saw Playworks in action, I was immediately struck by all the smiles on the kids' faces. They were all having so much fun and no one was left out. That really is the essence of Playworks."

Playworks is a national nonprofit organization that supports learning and physical health by helping low-income students in urban schools to have safe, inclusive recess experiences. UnitedHealthcare Community Plan is the exclusive statewide health care sponsor of Playworks Arizona, serving more than 25,000 children in 28 mostly low-income Title 1 schools throughout Maricopa County.

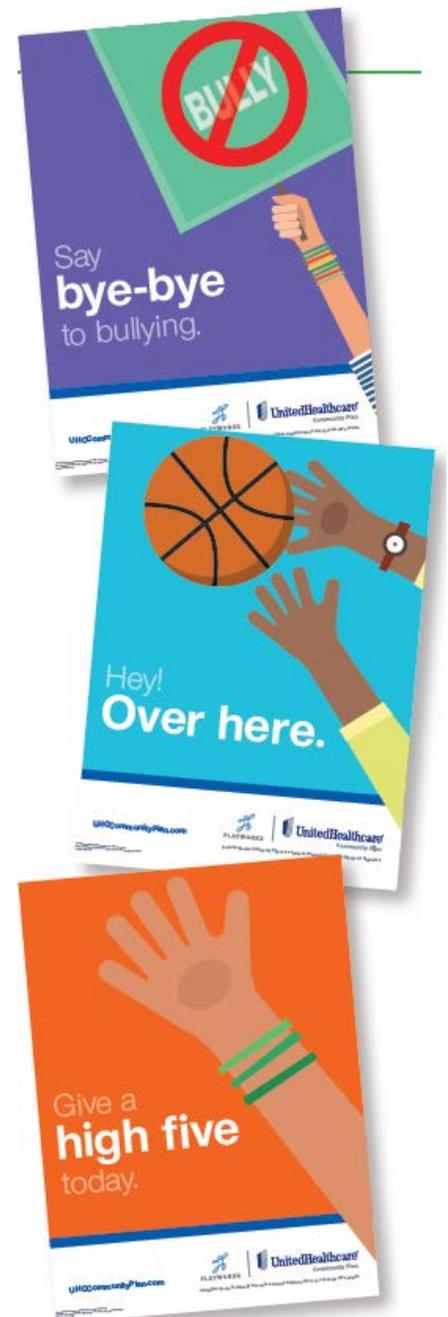
The partnership kicked off in a big way in January 2015, when UnitedHealthcare and the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee co-sponsored a giant recess led by Playworks at ASU Preparatory Academy. The event included a game of Red Light, Green Light that set a new Guinness world record for the number of participants, involving 1,136 fourth- and fifth-graders.

After the event, Gaudio met with Jill Vialet, the founder and CEO of Playworks, and Chuck Warshaver, executive director of Playworks Arizona. They took him to local schools, showing him how Playworks transforms the recess experience for children.

Gaudio saw firsthand how coaches create a safe, inclusive environment by leading children through an organized recess involving multiple games. Older children get the opportunity to lead by becoming junior coaches. Everyone on the playground is involved, and when conflicts do occur, children learn how to resolve them peacefully through Ro Sham Bo, otherwise known as Rock Paper Scissors.

“When children feel safe and comfortable at school, it improves their attendance and engagement, which can go a long way toward breaking the cycle of poverty.” *Joe Gaudio*

With Playworks, children are more active during recess, which can help improve their physical health and wellness. But the program also helps improve the overall learning at each school. "If there's a fight



⁷Playworks National Survey Results, <http://www.playworks.org/about/annual-survey/national>

at school, it usually takes place during recess,” said Gaudio. “When kids have a safe environment during recess, they come back in ready to focus and learn, so there’s less disruption, fewer discipline issues, better attendance and more productive class time. It all adds up to better overall achievement.”

In addition to providing financial assistance, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan is supporting Playworks in other ways, including hosting Junior Coach days at the UnitedHealthcare Community Plan office, sponsoring the Playworks “Run the Runway” 5K fundraiser at the Scottsdale airport and sending volunteers to help with beautification projects at local schools. Gaudio is a member of the board of directors and has helped Playworks expand into Yuma County. As a result, in the 2016–17 school year Playworks will double the number of children it currently serves in Arizona, reaching more than 50,000 students in over 50 schools. “The UnitedHealthcare mission — to help people live healthier lives — is so clearly aligned with the Playworks mission,” said Gaudio. “Children make up the bulk of our membership, and by helping them do better in school; we hope our partnership with Playworks will help children in Arizona to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.”

WHAT TEACHERS SAY ABOUT PLAYWORKS:⁷

94%

**SAY STUDENTS FOCUS
BETTER ON CLASS
ACTIVITIES**

96%

**SAY STUDENTS
COOPERATE WITH OTHERS
BETTER DURING CLASS**

96%

**SAY STUDENTS
PARTICIPATE MORE IN
ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**