

ODE TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

People-powered research

[Amy Halloran](#) | July/August 2010 issue



Scientists used community-based participatory research to improve the health of these young soccer players in Orange County, New York.

Photo: Susan Leggett/Dreamstime.com

Scientific studies are moving out of the lab and into neighborhoods, thanks to an innovative method called community-based participatory research (CBPR). In an upstate New York CBPR project, parents sit on the advisory board for a program to combat obesity, working closely with researchers to shape the study. Once this community assessment phase is finished, researchers will compile and share data with the families and discuss with them the best way to address the problem.

“Family-based interventions really haven’t been successful at all to date and part of the reason is the families aren’t engaged,” says Kirsten Davison, a professor in the Department of Health Policy, Management and Behavior at the University at Albany, SUNY, who is involved in the obesity project. “We’ve gone in assuming we know what works best for them and what their needs are. We’ve never really asked the parents what the issues are and what’s most important to them.”