



Obesity Action Coalition's Your Weight Matters 2023 Convention: DISCOVERING THE POWER OF OUR LIGHT

by Kendall Griffey, OAC Communications Coordinator

The Obesity Action Coalition's 12th annual *Your Weight Matters* Convention was a three-day, in-person event designed to equip attendees with the tools needed to take charge of their weight and health and shape a better world for people with obesity. More than 170 individuals across the world came together for an inspirational weekend packed with science-based education, hands-on tools and, most notably, a community of support.

The theme of the **YWM2023-Engage** Convention was "The Power of Our Light," presenting the question to attendees, "How will you use your light?" The goal of the weekend was for attendees to walk away knowing how they can use each of their unique strengths to make meaningful change for people living with obesity.

Understanding How Weight Impacts Health

The **YWM2023-Engage** Convention crowd was made up of individuals eager to learn from the experts and explore all the ways to take charge of their health journey.

The lineup featured speakers with diverse backgrounds ranging from obesity medicine and nutrition to mental health. The expert-led sessions taught attendees how to look past the outdated BMI measurement to more accurately and respectfully describe obesity, the complex relationship between the brain and the stomach to better navigate hunger and metabolism, the influence of mindset on reaching weight and health goals, and much more.

By the end of **YWM2023-Engage** Convention's educational sessions, attendees were equipped with practical tools to tackle their weight and health goals.



Advocating for a Better World for People with Obesity

The OAC aims to change the world for people living with obesity, and we cannot do it without the voice of our OAC Community. **YWM2023-Engage** helped more than 75 attendees strengthen and elevate their voices like never before with something for everyone, from advocacy-focused sessions to on-site action activities.

Beginner advocates had the opportunity to learn the basics of OAC's advocacy work and how to get involved, while more experienced advocates participated in a deep dive into how to take their advocacy skills to the next level. **YWM2023-Engage** also featured the OAC Advocacy Hub, where attendees learned all about our organization's advocacy work, our victories this year and our plans for next year.

One crowd-favorite activity from the event was a 10-foot interactive map of the United States in which attendees could place stickers to showcase where they have taken action!

By the end of the weekend, attendees were ready to step up and take action by challenging instances of weight bias and hurdles to accessing care. Many attendees realized the potential impact of getting more involved with OAC and the different actions we can take daily to educate others on obesity.

Empower Early: A Focus on Childhood Obesity Care

Taking place during National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, **YWM2023-Engage** Convention proudly introduced a brand-new youth-focused program called the Empower Early Initiative. This initiative brought 11 families from across the nation together for a one-of-a-kind experience tailored to teens living with obesity.

These families not only learned about the science behind effective obesity care but also formed lasting connections with each other. Some of the most heartwarming moments of the weekend were witnessing the teens smile, laugh and have fun with their new friends.

By the end of the weekend, many felt safe enough to share their stories with the rest of the crowd. For the first time, these teens learned that they are not alone in their journey anymore because they have joined a powerful community of compassionate, supportive individuals who understand the challenges they face.

How Will You Use the Power of Your Light?

OAC leaders wrapped up the weekend by sharing their experiences and encouraged attendees to stand up to the microphone and share theirs. We saw brand-new and returning Convention attendees share their stories of health challenges and weight bias, what brought them to the event and how they will advocate for the cause in the future.

YWM2023-Engage Convention became a safe space for a community like none other - a place where all can be treated with dignity and respect, without fear of judgment, and knowing every person in the room understood their pain and challenges.

Attendees left feeling empowered in their health journeys and energized to create a better world for people living with obesity, understanding that each one of us has a unique spark that has the power to light up the path ahead. The light within each of us has the potential to not only change our own lives but touch the lives of countless others.

YWM2023-Engage Convention proved that the OAC Community is an unstoppable force for change. Together, we will use the power of our light discovered during the Convention to ignite change for people with obesity across the world.



What's Ahead in 2024

In 2024, we are excited to present two unique *Your Weight Matters* Event experiences to meet the diverse needs of our OAC Community!



Your Weight Matters Virtual (YWM-Virtual) Convention

YWM-Virtual Convention is back for another weekend of immersive and interactive education! Tune in live on **May 18-19, 2024**, on our online Convention Portal for quality, science-based tools and valuable resources.

With a **free** registration option, you can take part in a packed weekend of education and opportunities to connect with fellow attendees!



About the Author:

Kendall Griffey, OAC Communications Manager, graduated from the University of North Florida with a BS in Communications with a focus in public relations. Kendall is passionate about her work in the non-profit sector and is driven to make a meaningful impact.



Your Weight Matters Regional (YWM-Regional) Convention

The OAC is proud to announce a brand-new program, *Your Weight Matters* Regional Convention. With this program, we are bringing the Convention experience to you!

In cities across the nation, we're bringing you a **cost-free** day of science-based education on weight management, nutrition, mental health and much more.

Do you live near these cities or have friends or family in the area? Come see us!

San Diego, CA (February 2024)

Indianapolis, IN (April 2024)

Tampa, FL (July 2024)

Austin, TX (September 2024)

Boston, MA (October 2024)

Visit YourWeightMatters.com for details and updates.





ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



JOIN TODAY: GO TO OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN

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