

The Rock Climbing Wall at
California Family Fitness in Folsom

GET YOUR KIDS MOVIN'!

*winning the battle against
childhood obesity*

Over the past three decades, obesity in children and adolescents in the United States has escalated at an alarming rate. Since the 1970s, the prevalence of overweight six to 11 year-olds has more than quadrupled.

With one in three children today—a whopping 110 million kids—overweight or obese, childhood obesity is being called an epidemic with devastating consequences.

To help reverse this frightening trend, schools, communities and parents are working together to get kids moving down the path of fitness.

In the battle against the bulge, those at the frontlines say the secret weapon is making fitness “fun” so that kids keep exercise a part of their lifelong routine.

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BY LYNN MACHON

a growing epidemic

Unlike nightmares and skin blemishes, childhood obesity is not something youth easily outgrow. A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* found that a staggering 80 percent of children who were overweight at ages 10 to 15 years became obese adults at age 25.

Sadly, obesity has both severe psychosocial and physical consequences for children and teens. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), psychological stress and social stigmatization can cause low self-esteem and hinder academic and social function well into adulthood.

Obese children, physically, are at risk for life-threatening conditions such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Statistics clearly show that as kids get older, they tend to get less active. That's why it is crucial to take steps now to teach school-age children how best to stay in shape.

how did this happen?

What mysterious contributing factors are to blame for our children becoming overweight? Nutrition experts say that it's no mystery at all. Children today are simply eating too much of the wrong foods and not getting enough daily exercise.

Victoria Berends with California Project LEAN, a joint program of the California Department of Public Health and the Public Health Institute, says a rise in caloric intake explains much of our nation's expanding waistline.

"From the 1970s to 2000, we've had a 500 calorie a day increase," explains Berends, noting that the biggest red flag in childhood obesity is not "food."

"Sweetened beverage intake by children in the United States has tripled over the past 30 years," reports Berends. A recent brief from UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research stated that 62 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 17, and 41 percent of children ages two to 11 in California drink at least one soda or other sweetened beverage every day.

Combine that increase in calories with a lack of exercise, and you've got a recipe for disaster.

In the 1980s, the healthy playing field changed dramatically when the explosion of technology signaled a decrease in physical activity for many children and teens.

A 2009 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that on average, eight to 18 year-olds spend an astounding seven and a half hours a day, seven days a week with media – watching television, playing video games, texting, listening to music or on the computer.

working with schools

Because children spend the majority of their days in classrooms, Project LEAN works to make sure schools throughout California are earning good grades in both nutrition and fitness.

Berends says federal standards for schools were a good first step in obesity prevention. "In 2004, Congress mandated that every school district have a wellness policy that established a nutrition standard for schools and goals for physical activity," explains Berends.

In addition to providing healthier school lunches, California was one of the first states in the nation to establish a law banning sodas in schools. Efforts to increase fitness soon addressed the other half of the obesity puzzle.

Adopted in January 2005, California's current education code establishes a standard of 200 minutes of physical activity every 10 school days for elementary school students, and 400 minutes every 10 days for middle and high school students.

Thankfully, many schools throughout the greater Sacramento area have gone outside the box to exceed fitness standards.

At Katherine L. Albani Middle School in Elk Grove, a before-school fitness session gives kids a healthy 45-minute jump start on the day. Other school districts have incorporated the SPARK (sparkpe.org) program of evidence-based curriculum and training that raise the bar for quality PE.

Numerous schools organize campus activities such as "walking school buses" and "Walk and Roll" months to keep kids moving before, during and after school hours.

One Folsom elementary school replaced the annual gift wrapping fundraiser with a jog-a-thon, a decision Berends applauds. "When schools hold something like a fun run, they can raise money while getting kids active at the same time," she says. "It sends a great message to the kids and to the community."

options for action

Schools can't solely be responsible for a child's fitness. To get the recommended 60 minutes of active play every day, kids must make exercise a priority after school and on weekends, as well. Fortunately, the opportunities for activity are endless.

Organized sports such as baseball and soccer tend to be the most popular, but many communities offer junior golf, tennis, martial arts classes, swim-

TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- **Take family walks after dinner.**
- **Schedule family fitness/dance nights .**
- **Limit screen time to two hours.**
- **Exercise while watching television.**
- **Keep fruit and veggies easy to reach.**
- **Register for a charity walk/run as a family (see page 16 for ideas).**

ming and dance programs too. Sports aside, there are tons of intriguing options for keeping active.

The City of Roseville offers a Kidfit program for ages seven to 12 that combines fitness lessons with rock climbing. In Fair Oaks, kids can participate in breakdancing, belly dancing or skateboarding classes, while the Sunrise Recreation and Park District offers youth fencing.

In Orangevale, kids are able to take a five-week cheerleading class, and through El Dorado Hills' Community Services District, kids can kayak across Lake Natoma or train for a youth triathlon. Check out your area's parks and recreation departments for even more unique fitness ideas for kids.

keeping fitness fun and fresh

To further entice kids to pull the plug on screen time, many local health clubs now feature classes designed specifically for adolescents and teens.

Roseville Health and Wellness's three-week Health Wise Kids Program for kids aged six to 17 combines dance, spin and fitness activities with age-appropriate music.

General Manager Lisa Marrero explains, "We saw the statistics of obesity in children and wanted to empower children themselves to take action to prevent diseases before they occur."

Spare Time Club locations throughout greater Sacramento also are placing a greater emphasis on youth. Johnson Ranch Racquet Club in Roseville offers a Jump 2 B Fit jump rope class, and Broadstone Racquet Club in Folsom hosts a Kid Zumba class that captures the high-energy Latin-style dance craze.

At California Family Fitness, Kid Fit classes and TRX for Teens tie into the First Lady's "Let's Move" campaign while other clubs in the area feature rock climbing, hip hop dance, yoga and teen spin classes.

"When working with kids, you have to keep it exciting and really high energy," says Mickey Riley, group exercise director at Broadstone. "Kids get

bored and tired of something quickly, so we mix it up all the time with new classes, new teachers and new music."

Outside of health clubs, Sky High Sports, an indoor trampoline venue in Rancho Cordova offers AllRobic cardio classes that burn more than 1,000 calories, and also hosts air dodge ball competitions that push exercise and fun.

And at Roseville's Flip2It Sports Center, Parkour, a gymnastics discipline where participants climb, dive and jump through an obstacle course, is particularly popular with teens.

One way to make fitness fun is by using Fitstix, a national phenomenon in gyms and schools such as Twin Oaks Elementary in Rocklin. Invented by local Applegate personal trainer Karen Joy Allen, Fitstix are handheld one-pound weights



that give workouts a rhythmic shake. "Kids just love them because of the fun factor," says Allen. "But they really amp up the workout by burning more calories. They are great for families."

Jessica Miller, certified personal trainer with Snap Fitness in Placerville and Shingle Springs, agrees fitness should be a family affair. "I see a big correlation between parents' activities and how the children are, health-wise." Snap offers after school group fitness classes for kids which include a focus on nutrition for the whole family to help get the entire family headed in the right direction.

Given our region's mild climate, there are plenty of activities in the neighborhood and along our amazing bike trail system for helping to stay (or get) fit by walking, biking, skateboarding, rollerblading or hiking.

With so many options, families will find that keeping kids moving is easy. Just take it one fun step at a time. •



UPCOMING FAMILY-FRIENDLY FITNESS EVENTS

2011 Komen Sacramento Race for the Cure

Plus: Little Roadrunners for the Cure
May 7, 2011
Cal Expo, Sacramento
komensacramento.org

California Run Festival & Relay's

Various run/walk and relay events plus three hour nature hike
June 5, 2011
Vacaville
supportoursociety.org

3rd Annual Running of the Bullipedes

Teams of five runners, connected, for a 1 mile foot race
June 30, 2011
Folsom
bullipedes.org

Eppies Great Race

Kids Duathlon
July 23, 2011
American River Parkway
thegreatrace.org

4th Annual Folsom CYCLEBRATION

September 17-18, 2011
Multiple events throughout Folsom
folsomcyclebration.com

Mustard Seed Spin

13 and 20 mile kids' ride
September 25, 2011
William B. Pond Recreation Area, Sacramento
mustardseedspin.org

Walk to Defeat ALS

5K and 1 mile walk
October 1, 2011
Raley Field, West Sacramento
walktodefeatal.org

Fair Oaks Dog Walk

2 mile walk
October 1, 2011
Fair Oaks Village Park
fairoaksdogwalk.com

Princess Promenade Fitness Festival

October 2, 2011
Discovery Park, Sacramento
princesspromenade.com

Second Annual Run for Courage

5K and 10K run/walk
October 8, 2011
Folsom Parkway Trails
runforcourage.com

HOT Pink 5K Run/Walk

October 8, 2011
The Fountains at Roseville
igniteleaders.org/hotpink

32nd Annual Apple Hill Harvest Run

3.5 mile run/walk, .5 mile kids' fun run
November 6, 2011
Camino
applehillrun.org

18th Annual Sacramento Run to Feed the Hungry

5K fun run/walk
November 24, 2011
Sacramento State University
runtofeedthehungry.com

5th Annual Folsom Turkey Trot

5K run/walk
November 24, 2011
Folsom Parkway Trails
folsomturkeytrot.com

29th Annual California International Marathon

Kaiser Permanente maraFUNrun and Fitness Walk
December 4, 2011
Folsom to State Capitol
runcim.org

For more events and fitness activities for the whole family, visit *Family Health & Wellness Magazine's* Web site: familyhw.com.