

McHenry County Youth are “Banking on Strong Bones”

The Situation

Calcium is needed every day for strong bones, teeth and overall health as they grow into adults. Children today are not getting enough calcium in their daily diets.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 70 percent of preteen girls and 60 percent of preteen boys do not meet daily calcium recommendations.

This calcium shortage in their diets places the current generation at greater risk for osteoporosis, a condition known as a “pediatric disease with geriatric consequences.”

Extension Response

“Banking on Strong Bones” is a curriculum that is geared to fourth graders, that addresses the need for calcium in diets.

The five lessons were taught through hands-on activities, classroom lecture, weekly challenges and weekly parent newsletters. The lessons focused on MyPyramid, portion size, how to read a nutrition label, weight bearing exercise and taste-testing of calcium rich foods. Each week the students keep track of the amount of calcium they consumed and received coins to use towards prizes at the conclusion of the program.

Impacts

Banking on Strong Bones was done in 3 schools in McHenry County. Students and parents were given a pre-survey at the beginning of the program and a post survey at the conclusion.

There was an over-all improvement in their knowledge of nutrition and an improvement in

the amount of calcium-rich foods they consumed and weight-bearing exercise.

In the post survey 54 percent reported drinking 3 or more glasses of milk the day before compared to the pre-survey of 35 percent.

When questioned in a pre-test 60 percent of the youth felt if a child doesn't get enough calcium now, they could get more when they are older. When asked the same question in the post-survey, only 8.1 reported that they could.

In the post survey, 73 percent stated that they would drink more milk in the future.

Feedback

Teachers of the students noticed positive changes of the class. They reported the students were drinking more milk at the noon meal and were more aware of the importance of healthy foods.

A parent stated after the conclusion of the program that their child reminded her family that it was important to drink milk every night with their meal.

Contact

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