On the Move to Better Health – Cavalier County

The Situation
Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. Some researchers consider children to be “overfed” but “undernourished.” Obese children are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, with 70 percent showing at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Obesity also increases the risk for diabetes, stroke, cancer and osteoarthritis.

Extension Response
On the Move to Better Health is a five-week school-based curriculum for fifth-graders. It is based on MyPlate, the current icon for good nutrition. The curriculum aims to increase fruits, vegetables and calcium-rich foods in the diets of children and improve fitness habits. Parents receive newsletters and participate in goal setting and other family-based activities.

Impacts
From 2007 to 2017, 22,212 children and their families participated in On the Move to Better Health. In 2016-17, 25 counties participated in the program. Post-surveys with 3,040 children showed the following as a result of the program:

- 50% ate more fruits and veggies
- 55% drank less pop
- 52% chose more healthful snacks
- 57% increased daily physical activity
- 50% ate more fruits and vegetables

Surveys with 896 parents in 2016-17 showed the following:

- 80% of parents/caregivers read the newsletter and 33% set a weekly goal.
- 37% increased their fruit consumption and 28% increased their vegetable consumption.
- 16% increased whole-grain intake.
- 18% increased their dairy consumption.

Cavalier County Impact
Extension Agent Lukach presented the program to 24 Langdon Area Elementary School 5th graders. On the local level:

- 54% ate more fruits and veggies
- 54% consumed more dairy
- 46% chose healthier snacks

Feedback
Cavalier County students said:

- “I liked it because you learn more on how to stay fit and strong.”
- “I liked it because it helps me eat more fruits and veggies.”
- “I liked it because I think it helps kids eat a healthier snack and lunches for a better life.”
- “I liked how it motivated me to eat healthier and exercise more.”

Public Value Statement
Improving health behaviors can increase quality of life and save millions of dollars in collective healthcare costs for North Dakotans throughout their lifetime.

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