Extension Partnerships Improve Concession Stand Offerings at Grand Forks Park District

The Situation
Community health assessments done in Grand Forks in 2013 and 2016 identified adult and childhood obesity as priority health issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) one in five children ages 6-19 are obese.

Obesity is a risk factor for cancer, asthma, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, diabetes, and heart disease and puts children at a higher risk for being bullied, teased, suffering from depression, isolation, lower self-esteem and becoming an obese adult.

In 2008 (most recent CDC data) obesity costs $147 billion in medical care costs. It has a staggering impact on the United States military with 5.7 million men and 16.5 million women ineligible for service because they exceed the army’s enlistment standards of weight and body fat. Obesity has gone from a personal problem to a public health crisis.

Extension Response
In May 2015, 687 hockey and figure skating families received concession surveys. A 40% response rate revealed that 59% of respondents felt that healthy choices should be offered at Park District facilities. Many families eat concession food four times a week or more and there were no healthy choices.

NDSU Extension Agent, Molly Soeby, partnered with Grand Forks Park District (PD) and Grand Forks Public Health Department (PHD) to change the concession offerings at the three largest ice arenas in Grand Forks. Public Health was awarded a $7,000 cancer prevention grant to work on this project.

A Better Bites (BB) menu was developed:
BB Beverage Guideline:
- Water (without flavorings, additives or carbonation)
- Milk low-fat (1%) and non-fat (skim) flavored mild with no more than 22 g of sugar / 8 oz.
- Juice (100% juice)

BB Meal Guideline:
- ≤ 600 calories for a combo (which includes a main entrée, fruit/veggie, water/milk)

BB Snack Guideline:
- ≤ 200 calories / packaged portion
- ≤ 10 % of total calories from saturated fat
- Zero trans fat

Impacts
A guideline has been developed for the PD concession’s menu states that 25% of the menus will meet the “Better Bites” meal, snack and beverage guidelines.

A 2016 repeat survey showed an increase of 5% in concession purchases, a 7% increase in respondents that said healthy options are important, and an increase of 10% satisfied with the nutritional value offered. The only complaint was a desire for more variety in healthy options; which is being addressed.

Public Value Statement
Offering healthy options at public venues can decrease obesity, the onset of chronic diseases related to obesity and save millions in medical costs.

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Resource Links
https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm