Rural Ward County Fifth Grade Students are On the Move to Better Health

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

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 children’s diets and improve fitness habits. Parents receive newsletters and participate in goal setting and other family-based activities.

Impacts
From 2007 to 2018, 25,050 children and their families participated in On the Move to Better Health in North Dakota. In 2017-18, 20 counties participated in the program. In Ward County, post-surveys with 153 children showed the following as a result of the program:

- 61 percent consumed more dairy
- 60 percent drank less soda pop
- 47 percent chose more healthful snacks
- 60 percent increased daily physical activity
- 50 percent ate more fruits and vegetables

Surveys with 742 parents/caregivers in 2017-18 showed the following:
- 81 percent read the newsletter and 33 percent set a weekly goal
- 33 percent of children increased their fruit consumption and 28 percent increased their vegetable consumption
- 12 percent of children increased whole-grain intake
- 20 percent of children increased their dairy consumption

Feedback from the Students
- I liked that it helped me see what to cut down on and what to eat more of.
- We were challenged to be healthier.
- I liked how it made me make healthier choices.
- I liked that it helped me to be healthier and make healthier choices/habits.
- I lost six pounds without even trying!

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Resource Links
www.ag.ndsu.edu/food