

McKenzie County Children 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 23 years. Some researchers consider children to be “overfed but undernourished.” Obese children are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, with 70% 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 2019: 29,360 children and their families participated in On the Move to Better Health in North Dakota.

Post-surveys with 171 McKenzie County children showed the following as a result of the program:



40% choose healthier snacks



43% consumed more dairy



47% drank less pop



51% increased daily physical activity



44% ate more fruits and vegetables

Surveys with parents in 2018-19 showed the following:

- 100% read the newsletter and 40% set a weekly goal.
- 50% increased their fruit consumption and 30% increased their vegetable consumption.
- 20% increased their whole-grain intake.
- 30% increased their dairy consumption.

Feedback

Children said:

- “I liked that the OTM program led me to eat better for a whole month.”
- “It made being healthier easier.”
- “One thing I liked about the program was they challenged us to push ourselves to the limits.”
- “I liked that you would set goals for yourself and your family to see if you can eat healthier.”

Teachers noted the following on evaluations at the conclusion of the program:

- 86% observed students making healthy choices at lunch.
- 71% noted that children were being physically active.
- 100% would be willing to have this program in their classroom again.
- 100% would recommend this curriculum to other instructors.

Primary Contact

Marcia Hellandsaas
NDSU Extension Agent, McKenzie County
201 5th Street NW, Suite 525
Watford City, ND 58854
701-444-3451
marcia.hellandsaas@ndsu.edu