Ward County 5th Graders are On the Move to Better Health

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
In 2014, 164 children and their families participated in On the Move to Better Health in Ward County. Post-surveys showed the following:

- 54 percent drank less pop
- 28 percent gave up screen time for at least a day
- 54 percent consumed more fruits and vegetables

Surveys of the parents of the students revealed:

- 84 percent read the newsletters the students brought home
- 32 percent of the families set goals for themselves
- 39 percent indicated their family’s fruit consumption had increased; 24 percent completed their goals
- 29 percent reported their family’s vegetable consumption had increased
- 13 percent reported their family’s whole-grain consumption had increased
- 89 percent of the families ate their evening meal together

Feedback
Children said:
- “I liked all the activities, especially the bingo.”
- “I really liked that we set goals and worked on them. I felt more likely to do what I was supposed to do.”

Parents said:
- “She showed us her beaded bracelet and explained how she earned the beads. Great program.”
- “He reminded us we need to go to the store and get more fruits and vegetables.”

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