

Introduction

A September 2004 Childhood Weight Status report published by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services indicated that 20% of New Jersey's sixth graders are obese and another 18% are overweight. Currently, the number of overweight and obese youth in New Jersey is higher than the national average. Many communities are largely unaware of the problem. However, by educating young people and adults on nutrition, fitness, and positive lifestyles, we can reverse the trends of poor health. Because of these factors, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Department of 4-H Youth Development identified Childhood Overweight/Obesity as a priority issue.

Goals of Program

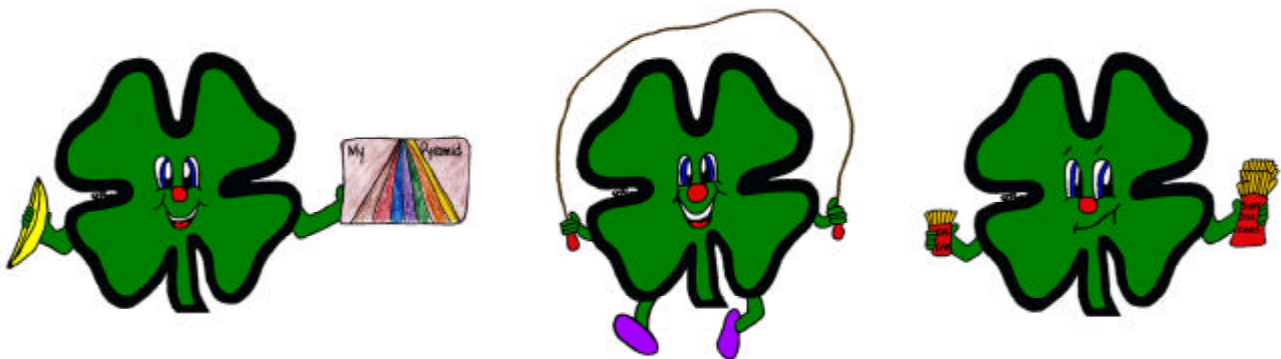
Youth and their families will:

- Understand the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity
- Learn ways to make healthy eating and physical activity a part of their daily lives
- Change eating habits by making healthy food choices
- Include physical activity in their daily lives

The ultimate goal is that youth will live longer, healthier lives.

Program Descriptions

The **Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H** (GMGH) action kits, display, and curriculum were developed to address the issue by providing an interactive and fun way to learn healthy eating habits, portion sizes, the new Food Pyramid, and simple exercises. The curriculum has three major focus areas – understanding MyPyramid, identifying portion sizes, and learning easy ways to exercise. The kits include the following activities - Exercise Challenge, Finding Your Pyramid, Healthy Plate, Measure Up, Portion Distortion, Read the Label, Serving Match, Think What You Drink, and What Counts. Each has a lesson plan and provides options for expanding the learning experience.



GMGH was created through a unique youth and adult partnership. A team of teens, called the 4-H Food and Fitness Ambassadors worked with the 4-H professionals to develop the activity kits and curriculum. The teens identified the areas of focus for the project, determined the title of the project, designed the logos and artwork used for the project, and evaluated potential activities to include in the activity kits.

Not only were the teens vital in the development of the program, the 21 4-H Food & Fitness Ambassadors were asked what changes in their behavior they had made since participating in the program. One indicated she had totally stopped drinking soda, while another drinks more milk and has a better understanding of the need for dairy products. More than half of the ambassadors indicated an increased awareness of the portions of food they are eating and are now eating healthier portions.

Since its inception in Spring 2005, the Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H action kits and curriculum have been used throughout the state in three primary delivery modes – 4-H clubs, youth education through school enrichment and after school programs, and general public awareness.

As part of the General Public Awareness component of the program, the first use of GMGH was 14 county fairs in the summer of 2005. The teen 4-H Food & Fitness Ambassadors staffed the GMGH exhibit at the fairs. The significant feedback reported from the youth was the following two facts: Kids had no idea how many calories or sugar grams were in soda and other juice drinks and how easy it is to exercise each day. The 4-H helpers said many parents had as much fun as the youth doing the activities.



To begin the process of the curriculum being used for youth education programs, 35 RCE professionals including 4-H staff, Family and Community Health Science educators, Expanded Food and Nutrition Program staff, and Food Stamp Nutrition Education staff, participated in an inservice training to introduce the Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H program. The participants gave the training program an average rating of 4.8 (with 1 = poor and 5 = excellent). Since then, GMGH was introduced to 75 site coordinators for the NJ After 3 program and 150 participants in the Children’s Health Summit–Fighting Back Against Childhood Obesity. One third of the participants requested more information about the program. A two hour workshop at the South Jersey School Age Child Care Conference introduced the program to 20 school age child care providers. The program has been presented as a Share Fair session at the national Child Youth and Families At-Risk (CYFAR) conference and as an educational exhibit at the National Obesity Conference.

The GMGH curriculum is being used for school enrichment and after-school program. The program has reached over 1000 youth, primarily of elementary school age. The participants gave the training program an average rating of 4.8 (with 1 = poor and 5 = excellent). Some of the specific impact is noted in the Snapshot Impact below.

For use of the curriculum in 4-H clubs, volunteer trainings within counties have introduced the GMGH program. To date, 38 adult volunteers have participated in these trainings. Throughout the state, 4-H club leaders are incorporating Get Moving - Get Healthy activities at club meetings. 4-H volunteers have introduced healthy snacks at 4-H events and activities. Beyond New Jersey, 8 adults and 11 teens from Maryland took part in a GMGH workshop at the Maryland Volunteer Leaders Forum in November 2005. Twenty teens and adults participated in a GMGH workshop as part of the 2006 John Deere 4-H Leader Academy. Another 18 adult volunteers were introduced to GMGH at the 2006 Northeast Regional Volunteer Forum.

Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H has opened the doors for counties in New Jersey to partner with local schools, health organizations and county health departments. The GMGH materials were on display at the Mercer County Administration Building in March 2006. GMGH has been used at health fairs and school events in Atlantic, Ocean, and Cape May counties.

Snapshot Impact - General Public Awareness

In Cape May County, 4-H volunteers used the statewide Get Moving - Get Healthy display to provide hands on activities for youth and adults at two community events. The 21st Century Community Learning Center Program at Wildwood High School presented a Health Fair highlighting educational programs related to health that are offered by community organizations. At this event, 32 youth and 18 adults viewed the exhibit and actively discussed the various activities. Twenty two youth completed the Serving Mix and Match, Think What You Drink, Healthy Plate and the Exercise Challenge activities. Eighteen adults viewed and discussed Portion Distortion, Serving Mix and Match and Think What You Drink activities.



At New Jersey Audubon's Nature Center of Cape May's Kids Can Expo, two teen 4-H members staffed the Get Moving - Get Healthy display and conducted the Healthy Plate, Think What You Drink, Serving Mix and Match and the Exercise Challenge activities with 165 youth. While youth were completing the activities, adult volunteers talked with 57 parents about the importance of the GMGH Initiative. Parents reported that they were unaware of serving size and sugar content information.

Snapshot Impact - Youth Education

Mercer County has used the curriculum extensively for School Enrichment programs. Three hundred and twenty-five (325) youth in fourth and fifth grade participated in Get Moving - Get Healthy activities. The youth gave the program an average rating of 4.56 (with 1 = poor and 5 = excellent from 188 responses). When asked to "list one or two things you learned," participant responses included comments about the importance of exercise, descriptions of portion sizes, and learning about how much sugar is in soda. When asked to list "one way you plan to use the information," the responses ranged from getting more exercise, to checking labels on food, to properly measuring and eating the correct amounts of food.

Snapshot Impact - Youth Education

The Get Moving - Get Healthy curriculum has become an important educational component of the Atlantic City Uptown Complex School after school program in Atlantic County where 62 sixth grade students have participated in Think What You Drink, Portion Distortion, My Pyramid activities and have made salsa as a healthy snack. The youth gave the program an average rating of 3.81 (with 1 = poor and 5 = excellent). 87% of students will do something new or different as a result of participating in the program, 81% plan to share what they learned and another 69% will change the way they think or act.

Snapshot Impact - Youth Education

In Atlantic County, Get Moving - Get Healthy was incorporated as part of 30-hour famine sponsored by local church in Egg Harbor City for youth in grades 4-8. The adults running the event thought it would be a great program to "jump start" the youth into eating healthy after adhering to the "30-hour famine." The 15 youth participated in the Think What You Drink, Portion Distortion, and Exercise Challenge activities. The youth gave the program an average rating of 4.8 (with 1 = poor and 5 = excellent).

All participants had an eye opening experience- some even making comments such as- "Now I know why my Mom doesn't allow me to drink soda!" And "Wow, I could have eaten a cheeseburger for the same calories as that Super Size soda!" Many participants stated that they planned to tell their families about what they learned and that they would try to make changes in food and beverage choices. They also stated they would make a conscious effort to get more exercise.

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