

Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Eating to Families

Information Pack: July 2009



Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Families

This forum focused on the latest research, current initiatives and example programs including the effect of the media and marketing on children's healthy eating choices. Case studies focusing on targeting families illustrated the importance of educating the parents and children in conjunction.

Ian Kett, Executive Director of Kinect Australia, opened the forum by stating the importance of families working together to achieve a healthy lifestyle including physical activity and healthy eating. The neighbourhood, environment and infrastructure in a community can influence individuals' access to and options of healthy food and physical activity. Parents have the influence to shape their children's behaviours, attitudes and skills. Families evolve over time and different cultures have different beliefs and attitudes regarding what constitutes a healthy family. Ian concluded by thanking the presenters for today and reiterating the importance of a whole family working together to achieve a maximal health benefit.

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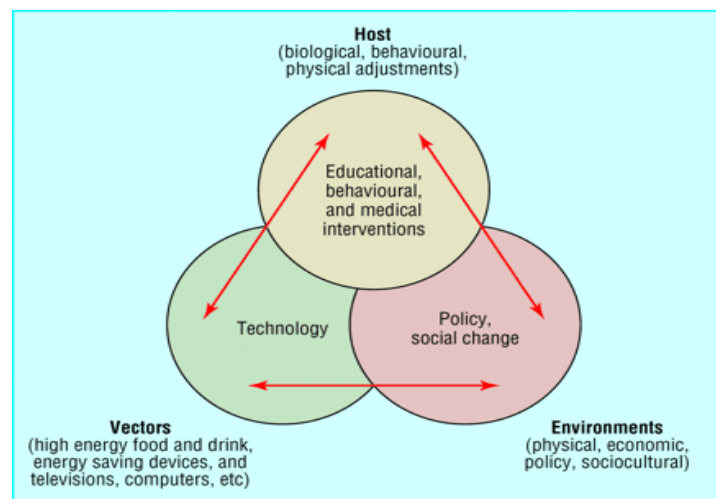
Getting A Seat At The Table Policy, Law and Advocacy For Obesity Prevention

Jane Martin, Senior Policy Advisor, Obesity Policy Coalition

Jane Martin opened her presentation by stating the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) was established in 2006 by four public health organisations (Diabetes Australia- Vic, The Cancer Council- Vic, VicHealth and WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention, Deakin University) with experience and an interest in prevention of chronic disease. All partners had either experience or an understanding of the importance of policy and regulatory reform to create supportive environments for healthy eating and physical activity. Jane mentioned the importance of the Parents Jury in advocating for policy change. She mentioned the chronic health conditions associated with being overweight or obese.

Jane also stressed the importance of the relationship between overweight children becoming overweight adults. She revealed that almost a quarter of children and adolescents in Australia are overweight. Of these, about one in four are obese, a proportion that is increasing each year. A strategy needs to be devised to counteract the rising prevalence of overweight and obesity, which is a complex challenge as it involves both societal and individual changes.

THE ROLE OF POLICY

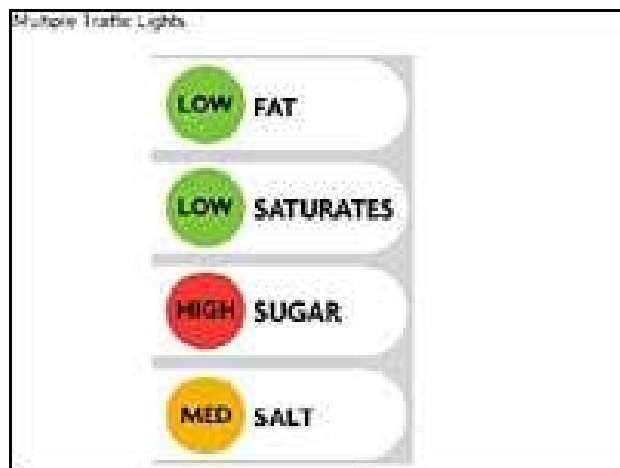


The OPC developed from a model similar to that adopted from QUIT and tobacco control, and invests in both policy and legal expertise. The broad objectives of the OPC is to identify, analyse and advocate for evidence-based policy and regulatory initiatives to reduce overweight and obesity, particularly in children. The OPC aims to influence policy at a state and national level and contributes to enquiries on policy development, law reform and regulatory options for change. The OPC engages with key peak bodies mainly from public health.

These policies include a number of initiatives aimed at preventing overweight and obesity in children. The policies were presented to the government, opposition and various Members of parliament. The policies were also presented to the national opposition health minister. Policies included a ban on all marketing of unhealthy food to children, 'front of pack' traffic light labelling and tax reforms.

Jane addressed the online marketing campaigns that are aimed at children to get their parents to buy toys. She also mentioned the number of unhealthy food companies that offer an incentive of a free toy to increase the likelihood of children selecting the food choice. She illustrated the need for consistent labelling across different brands of food to ensure people are aware of labelling included on healthy food and labelling included on unhealthy food.

TRAFFIC LIGHT FOOD LABELLING SYSTEM



Jane by concluding presented (above diagram) the labeling the OPC recommends for use on all food packaging to make it easier for consumers to make healthier choices.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

[Obesity Policy Coalition Website](#)

Latest news, research and media on advocating for policy change on unhealthy food for children.

[Coalition on Food Advertising to Children \(CFAC\)](#)

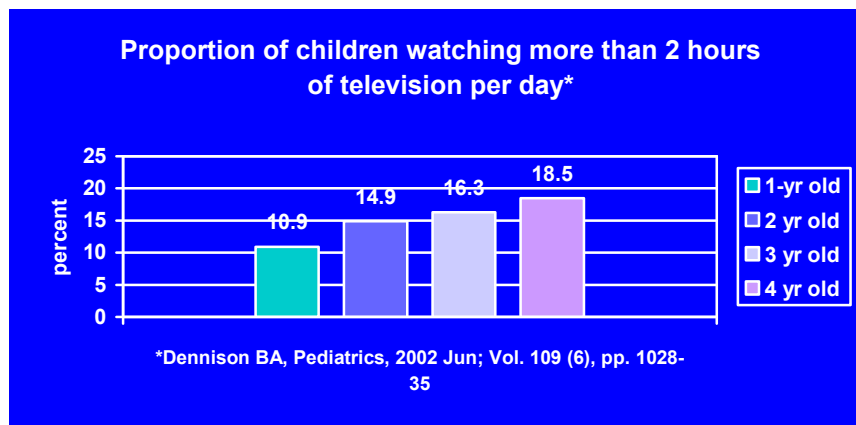
Is a coalition of public health groups who agree that television food advertising is a significant threat to the future health of Australian children.

Importance Of Parents In Early Childhood Obesity Prevention

Dr Kylie Hesketh, Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research, Deakin University

Kylie opened her presentation by citing the rapid increase in the number of children between the ages of 0-5 years who are overweight. She also stated that over the past 5-10 years research has been limited in this age group. The majority of the research has been conducted since 2003 as the prevalence in childhood obesity has increased. Lack of movement and unhealthy eating can begin in early childhood. Research has found that one-third of the diet for this age group is high energy dense foods and drinks.

This graph illustrates the high proportion of children viewing television. Children under 5 years of age are advised to watch no more than two hours of television a day, and it is recommended that children under two do not watch any television. In the early ages of childhood this is crucial for brain development.



Kylie was involved in conducting a systematic literature review on diet and sedentary behaviours in children aged 0-5 years. From the literature review, it was determined that interventions conducted in a home setting, including the parents and children were seen as the most successful.

Most interventions targeting skills and competencies (knowledge was not judged) were most successful, as these interventions are equipping the parents with the skills to change behaviour. Parents are very important in shaping children's behaviours, as models. Parent's confidence is associated with children's eating behaviours. A strategy could be implemented to train new parents to be able to cope with situations involving children demanding unhealthy food.

Kylie also presented on the Infant Feeding Activity and Nutrition Trial, a program testing the effectiveness of an early childhood obesity prevention intervention delivered to first time parents.

The program focuses on the skills needed to support positive diet and physical activity behaviours, as well as reducing sedentary behaviour for infants between 3 to 18 months. The program was implemented into 14 local government areas, 62 groups were randomly selected, 31 groups in the intervention group (275 families) and 31 in the control group (284 families).

A paediatric dietitian conducts sessions for the intervention group, involving six 2 hour sessions over 15 months, including; Infant DVD, handouts, reinforcing 6 key messages. The program commences when infants are 3 months old. The control group received newsletters on generic baby health topics. The findings concluded 80% of families found the sessions useful, particularly the practical sessions and in particular parents in low socio economic areas found the sessions and DVD very useful.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

What Have Schools Got To Do With Family Health?

Dr Lisa Gibbs, Senior Research Fellow, University of Melbourne

Lisa illustrated the important role schools play in providing healthy food and physical activity opportunities, as 50% of children's waking hours on a weekday are spent at school. She mentioned that children consume snack food at school, usually obtained from home. Schools are required to provide children 2 hours of physical activity in the curriculum per week. The Australian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend children participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day and even several hours of physical activity per day. The primary influence on child health is the home (parents, grandparents, siblings, sociocultural) and school environment (principal, teachers, peers, and social norms).

Lisa outlined two programs focusing on the school setting, fun 'n healthy in Moreland and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. 'Fun 'n healthy' in Moreland is a 5 year research study involving 23 primary schools in the Moreland area. This area predominantly is of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and people from low socio economic status, and over one third of the community is born overseas. The Moreland community has one in three children who are overweight or obese. In designing programs that focus on children, issues related to body disorders need to be considered. The program utilized the Health Promoting Schools Framework. The evaluation showed physical activity increased when loose activities were available in the playground and when teachers were on yard duty. Many schools redesigned their playgrounds based on the findings from the study. The [Apple slinky](#) (it cores, slices and peels apples) was a great success in increasing fruit consumption amongst the children, as the Apple Slinky creates an exciting way for children to eat apples. The biggest barrier to change was the parents in implementing healthy food into the canteen, as parents think their children will want to consume unhealthy food.



Lisa talked about the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program. The program is aimed at primary school students in grades 3-6. Each week students spend 1 hour in the garden with a specialist gardener, and 1.5 hours in the kitchen with a specialist chef. The program relies on volunteer support. Funding is provided by the Department of Education to 40 government primary schools across the State of Victoria and by the Commonwealth Government to 160 primary schools across Victoria to run a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program.

A study was conducted using 6 program schools and 6 matched comparison schools. The results showed parents preferred cooking and gardening when the children were not involved and children enjoyed cooking and gardening more than the parents expected with children wanting to try healthier food.

Lisa concluded by stating that there is strong potential for schools to influence family health through: role modeling, direct influence on children's knowledge, skills and behaviours, school policies, engagement of families in school activities and indirect influence via child-driven changes.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Family Based Weight Management Program

Kay Gibbons, Manager of Nutrition Services, Royal Children's Hospital

Kay opened her presentation by stating that the incidence of overweight and obesity is higher for those from low socio economic status (SES), and children from culturally diverse backgrounds. The majority of the families who attend this Family Based Weight Management Program are from culturally diverse backgrounds. The program uses a whole of family approach as evidence shows that a family based model is best to impact on children's behaviour change. This stresses the importance in promoting outdoor play for children and restricting a television in children's bedrooms.

This program focuses on other recommendations such as children 0-2 years should not have any screen time and should be active 3 hours per day. Children aged 3-5 years should be active 3 hours a day and have less than one hour of screen time per day. A strong association is found between intake of sweet drinks and overweight. Different cultures have different perceptions of weight and body shape, different value of food and different views of children and play. Kay concluded by presenting that much evidence supports early intervention programs allowing for small, gradual but permanent behaviour change and to increase physical activity opportunities whenever possible.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Premiers Active Families Challenge

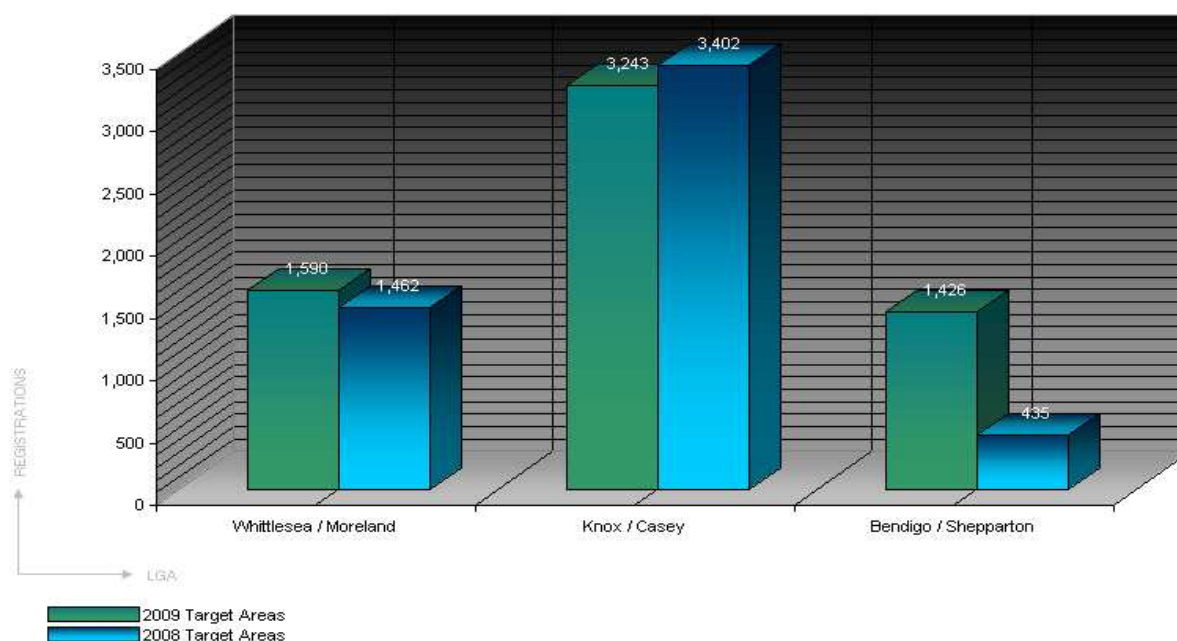
Jenny Vizec, Group Manager and Danielle Hollaway, Corporate Communications Manager, Department of Planning and Community Development

The Premiers Active Families Challenge commenced in 2008 and due to its success, occurred again in 2009. The aim of the program was for families to complete 30 minutes of physical activity over 30 days. Each family that registered for the challenge received 15 free passes to the YMCA and 15% discount at Rebel Sport. The challenge was free to participate in and prizes and incentives were given to families and schools.

The Challenge was implemented as a response to the diabetes epidemic with the concept being similar to the Premiers Reading Challenge. The number of individuals that registered for the challenge in 2008 was approximately 28,000 and increased in 2009 to 50,000. Families were engaged to be active through a variety of methods. Local events and schools were the best settings for people to become aware of the challenge. Each year the challenge had three target Council areas with targeted promotions. The first year the target areas were: Moreland, Casey and Shepparton and in 2009 the target areas were: Whittlesea, Knox and Bendigo. Last year 20% of registrations were from target areas.

The 2009 target area approach accounts for 12% of all individual registrations in the Challenge, approximately 6000 registrations higher than last year.

2008/09 COMPARITIVE TARGET AREA REGISTRATIONS (INDIVIDUAL REGISTRATIONS)



Using the media to target families was a key factor of the Challenge's success. The three key successes in achieving registrations was through the media partnerships with Herald Sun and Leader Newspapers, and engagement of Ambassadors such as Dr Karl Kennedy from Neighbours, Olympian James Tomkins and the Melbourne Zoo. Advertising also occurred on the Herald Sun website. E-bulletins and emails were distributed throughout the challenge which encouraged families to continue participating in physical activity. As the challenge was very successful in 2008 limited changes were required for the 2009 Challenge.

Some small changes were based on feedback from the 2008 challenge. Danielle concluded by stating the top five learnings from the challenge included; schools were the most effective communication channel, the target areas approach was effective in generating more registrations, signing people up on the spot was very effective at events and a mix of approaches generates the highest interest. The Premiers Active Families Challenge may run next year if the Premier provides funding for the challenge.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Interactive Session

Facilitated by Theresa Whalen, Kinect Australia

Panel:

- [Sport and Recreational programs for Families of New and Emerging Communities](#)
Claudia Abakah, Project Officer, Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)
- [YMCA Family Program](#)
Adrian Holdsworth, Health and Wellness Program Manager, YMCA Victoria
- [Healthy Families in Monash](#)
Kate Bolaffi, Healthy Families in Monash Project Officer, Greater Monash GP Network
- [Family Cycling Outings](#)
Kathy Brunning, Executive Assistant, Cycling Promotion Fund
- [Working towards Healthy Eating and Exercise for Life \(WHEEL Change\)](#)
Elizabeth Stewart, Patient Links & Health Promotion Coordinator, Knox Division Of General Practice
- [fun 'n healthy in Moreland](#)
Maryanne Tadic Health Promotion in Primary Schools Coordinator, fun 'n healthy in Moreland! project

Claudia explained that CMY supports a variety of programs and other agencies with their programs and acts as an advisory group to support links to young people and the community. CMY is delivers in a school holiday program for children in the Hume region in partnership with Banksia Gardens Community Centre. The parents help prepare healthy meals for the children during the program and through attending the program and watching the children be active, increasing their awareness of the benefits of physical activity. For more information [click here](#)

Adrian provided a brief overview of the YMCA's experience in targeting families. YMCA Victoria will soon be implementing a Family Membership across more than 30 branches in Victoria. The YMCA definition of a family will be any group living at the same address and who pay the membership from the same bank account. This definition represents an inclusive opportunity for family access that is not only for the traditional mother, father and child model of a family. Families will be entitled to attend exclusive events and gain concessionary rates to other programs, services and offers in YMCA Branches.

In an innovative shift for the Australian Industry, children as young as 10 years old will be allowed Health Club access and children aged 13 years and above will have full access to the YMCA Branch. This is inclusive of group fitness classes and aquatic usage.

This level of access is only achieved via completing an induction process with supervision from a parent or guardian. YMCA Victoria's Family Membership is a significant step towards removing the barriers to family activity and increasing the health and wellness of our communities in Victoria.

Kate briefly talked about the [Healthy Families in Monash project](#). The Greater Monash GP Network in conjunction with MonashLink Community Health Service was recently successful in obtaining a Healthy Active Australia Community and School Grant from the Department of Health and Ageing.

The pilot project addresses the growing childhood obesity rates and fosters healthy lifestyle changes in primary school aged children. The project has four free parent workshops for the 5 schools participating in the program. Each workshop provides practical and reliable information about promoting active lifestyle and healthy eating habits. The workshops are facilitated by local dietitians and experts in the field.

The project offers ongoing peer support to the school community through informative newsletters and a complementary website. The website enables all parents living in the City of Monash to view recipes, tips and guidelines regarding healthy eating and physical activity. Website visitors are also able to submit questions to be answered by a GP or dietitian through the site.

The project operates under the advice of a Reference Group Committee and will be evaluated by an external evaluation company.

Kathy talked about The Mums (& Dads) on Bikes Program. The rides are a unique set of short rides designed especially for young children, even those on training wheels. Rides are generally no more than 5km one way and are to child-friendly destinations such as Bundoora Park, Diamond Valley Miniature Railway and the Children's Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens. To shorten distances and avoid hills, they often incorporate the train.

The group's motto is "No one is too slow; we're always happy to stop for a rest, play, snack, nappy change, breastfeed or until a tantrum is over". The rides provide a fun and supportive physical activity option for young children and their parents. They are auspiced by Darebin Bicycle Group and generally meet in Northcote the first Sunday of the month. Kathy has 70 people on her Mums (& Dads) on Bikes email reminder list and has been nominated for two awards for the program.

Elizabeth briefly talked about the [WHEEL Change \(Working towards Healthy Eating and Exercise for Life\)](#) Program. In 2008, Knox Community Health Service in partnership with Knox Division of General Practice received Commonwealth funding for this new community initiative. The program is funded to run until July 2009. WHEEL Change will focus on the unique role parents and schools have in developing children's future choices and attitudes towards food and physical activity. Free classes for parents and students by an Accredited Practising Dietitian and General Practitioner are available to participating schools and will be held at the Knox Civic Centre in 2009.

Following on from Dr Lisa Gibbs' earlier presentation, Maryanne discussed the community development aspect of [fun 'n healthy in Moreland](#). She is involved in enhancing initiatives around physical activity and healthy eating for families and school communities, with a focus on promoting links with community organisations and developing sustainable change. She was focusing on the issue of sustainability. The demographics amongst the parents in different areas is varied. It was concluded working with parents, children and families decrease barriers for physical activity in their communities.

Group Discussion Themes:

- Meeting regularly with partner organisations is an important factor in program success
- Develop Partnerships
- Importance of evaluation
- Don't reinvent the wheel, use findings from other programs
- Link to other reputable websites for resources
- Making the program into a policy or strategy, for sustainability

RELATED RESOURCES *(click the heading where possible for more information)*

['Go for your life'](#)

The 'Go for your life' Campaign provides information and resources for families and children encouraging them to eat healthier and become more active.

[Family circumstances, sedentary behaviour and physical activity in adolescents living in England: Project, STIL. The International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, 11 June 2009, open access](#)

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationships between family circumstances (e.g. socio-economic status, single vs. dual parent household, presence/absence of siblings) and leisure-time physical activity and sedentary behaviours in adolescents. A total of 1171 adolescents (40% male; mean age 14.8 years) completed diaries every 15 minutes for 3 weekdays outside of school hours and 1 weekend day. Associations were not consistent across behaviours or between genders. The study indicated that boys from single parent households and girls from low socio-economic families may be at increased risk of high sedentary behaviour. Those living in low socioeconomic neighbourhoods may be at increased risk of reduced participation in sports and exercise.

[Family influences on children's physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. The International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, 16 June 2009, open access](#)

There is evidence of a clustering of healthy dietary patterns and physical activity among young people and also of unhealthy behaviours. The identification of influences on children's health behaviors, particularly clustered health behaviors, at the time at which children develop is imperative for the design of interventions. This local study examines associations between parental modeling and support and children's physical activity (PA) and consumption of fruit and vegetables (FV), and combinations of these behaviours. The study concluded that parental modeling of and support for physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption were differentially associated with these behaviours in children across behavioural domains.

[Health Promoting Schools Framework](#)

'Health Promoting Schools' is a global concept that can simultaneously be used to describe an approach, a philosophy or a framework for successful school health promotion. The health promoting schools framework includes three interrelated areas such as, teaching and learning curriculum, school environment and partnerships and community links.

Tomorrow People

The tomorrow people website is providing information and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's to ensure their family is healthy. The information provided is on dietary guidelines, strategies to get their children active and information about the doctor. Tomorrow People is part of the Australian Better Health Initiative's [Measure Up](#) campaign, a joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative.

The Parents Jury Website

The Parents Jury is an online network of parents, grandparents and guardians, who are interested in improving the food and physical activity environments of Australian children. The network advocates on behalf of parents to ensure policies and media are enforcing healthy food and physical activity for children.

'Healthy Eating And Physical Activity In The Early Years'

'Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in the Early Years' project is run by the South Australian government to support educators, children and families. It promotes healthy eating and being active in preschools, childcare centers and Family Day Care. It supports educators to encourage healthy eating and being active within families by providing professional learning opportunities for the staff involved.

Healthy Weight And Wellbeing For Children

The Healthy Weight and Wellbeing for Children initiative is being developed by CSIRO to help parents make healthy eating and physical activity a higher priority for families. The initiative has developed 10 steps to help parents encourage their children to eat well and be active. This website also provides a wide range of information and resources on healthy lifestyles.

Kids 'Go for your life'

Kids - 'Go for your life' is managed by Diabetes Australia – Vic and Cancer Council Victoria, and funded by the Victorian Government. Kids - 'Go for your life' encourages healthy eating and physical activity in children through primary schools and early childhood services via the Kids - 'Go for your life' Award Program. The program encourages children to enjoy healthy eating and physical activity by promoting six healthy messages.