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“New Year, New You” Campaign (527 words)

“Losing weight” tops the list of New Year’s Resolutions for many adults. Now, with childhood obesity reaching alarming rates, the same resolution can trickle down to kid-level. Conduct a “New Year, New You” campaign to serve as a turning point for students to make positive lifestyle changes.

To help students see the New Year as a fresh start for healthier living, ask local health experts to give “Lunch Time Pep Talks” to students. They can discuss the importance of setting goals, how small lifestyle changes can make a big difference, and the significance of proper nutrition and exercise.

Send home a “Healthy Living Goals” worksheet with practical ideas to help students and their parents successfully set and achieve goals. **Some tips and ideas to include:**

- Set specific goals that you can measure. Instead of saying you want to lose weight, set a specific, measurable goal to lose two pounds per week.
- Write down your goals, and use positive words. Write the specific goal you want to achieve in positive terms. Instead of writing, “I will stop being a couch potato after school,” re-word your goal in more positive terms: “I will exercise for one hour every day after school.” Post your written goal in a high-visibility location (such as on the bathroom mirror, your computer monitor or the refrigerator) to serve as a daily reminder of what you're working toward.
- Set realistic goals. Choose goals that are within your reach, keeping in mind your finances, schedule, and other factors that could sabotage your success.
- Create an action plan. Map out steps toward your goal with target dates for completion. Cross off each step as you accomplish it to track progress and build momentum.
- Identify your reason behind each goal. List how you will personally benefit from achieving a goal. Knowing why you want to pursue a goal will motivate you to keep moving forward when you face an obstacle or experience a setback.
- Be your own cheerleader. Believe in yourself, and stay positive about your progress.
- Gather a support team. Identify friends and family members who can help you reach your goals. Even better, team up with someone who shares similar goals and work towards them together.
- Reward yourself. Celebrate your achievements, both big and small. For example, if you ate a well-balanced, healthy lunch every day this week — but you didn’t lose any weight — celebrate your self-discipline and healthy choices.

For detailed health information geared toward students and their parents, direct them to the **websites mentioned on page X** of this newsletter.

Tap into the power of the competitive spirit by hosting a month-long “Get on Goal” event, where students can post their healthy living goals and track their progress. Ask students to sign a goal pledge or contract, with a parent’s signed approval when they’ve reached a goal. (To make it a school-wide event, involve the faculty and staff in their own goal-setting competition.) Award prizes as students achieve goals. Prizes can include healthy food prizes (i.e., smoothie, fruit salad, yogurt, our Crumble Crunch cinnamon nuggets) and activity-related prizes (i.e., sports bottle, coolie, pedometer, sweatband, jump rope).

Free Backpack Brochures for Parents (104 words)

Looking for a free, easy way to educate parents about making healthy eating goals a manageable, everyday practice to fit into their busy lifestyle? Then send for free copies of “Nutrition Reference Guide for Busy Parents: What Should Kids Eat Every Day” Backpack Brochure developed by the School Nutrition Association (SNA) and the Child Nutrition Foundation (CNF).

The brochure highlights helpful tips on daily-recommended servings and appropriate portion sizes for school-aged children, plus tips for parents on how to balance a healthy diet for their children within a hectic schedule.

To order free brochures (pay only shipping and handling), call SNA at (800) 728-0728.

Make School Lunches Score a Touchdown! (91 words)

With the Superbowl just a few weeks away, convert your cafeteria into a mini football stadium to pump up the enthusiasm for healthy lunches. Display team flags and colors throughout the cafeteria. Erect an end-zone out of PVC piping and place it on top of a small piece of artificial turf. Serve a “kick-off” lunch, with football-themed foods, such as Touchdown Turkey Wrap, MVP Players Pasta, Field Goal Field Greens, Quarterback Snacks, etc. Encourage students to vote for their favorite team and to wear team colors the Friday before Superbowl Sunday.

Give Yourself a Pat on the Back! (268 words)

School nutrition programs have made tremendous strides in an effort to promote a healthy childhood weight by offering balanced and nutritious school meals. Take a look at these recent success stories:

- On November 28, 2006, ABC's *Nightline* highlighted the Berkeley, California school nutrition program as a reflection of the great things happening in America's school cafeterias. The TV program noted an increase in school lunch participation as more students enjoy healthful and tasty meals prepared with lean meats, whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables.
- An article in the August 20, 2006, issue of the *New York Times Magazine* states one can "throw a dart at a map and you will find a school district scrambling to fill its students with things that are low fat and high fiber."
- A recent study published in the June 12, 2006 issue of *Nation's Restaurant News* found that secondary students are increasingly consuming more healthful food options, such as fruit, salads, and milk and passing by traditional fast food staples, such as fries and burgers. The study also noted an increase in school foodservice participation as a result of student emphasis on healthy meals.

The efforts of dedicated school nutrition professionals to advance good nutrition for all children continue to result in tasty, nutritious lunch and breakfast choices for students. These efforts continue in the context of an average school lunch price of under \$2, combined with rising labor and benefit costs, increasing food costs and often a premium on whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. For that, you should give yourselves a pat on the back.

Direct Kids & Parents to Online Resources (218 words)

Where can kids and parents turn to for information about living a healthy lifestyle? Point them in the right direction by highlighting a "Healthy Lifestyle Website" on the school menu you send home with students. Don't forget to include these website links on your school's own website. Here are a few good websites to get you started:

- www.kidnetic.com: This website encourages kids (ages 9-12) and their parents to begin the process of behavior change toward healthy lifestyles. Kidnetic.com is the first component of ACTIVATE, a healthy eating and active living initiative formed by the International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation.
- <http://kidshealth.org> : Created by The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media, KidsHealth provides families with accurate, up-to-date, and jargon-free health information they can use. KidsHealth has separate areas for kids, teens and parents with thousands of in-depth features, articles, animations, games, recipes and resources — all original and all developed by experts in the health of children and teens.
- www.exhibits.pacsci.org/nutrition/nutrition_cafe.html: Who said you shouldn't play with your food? At this site from the Pacific Science Center and the Washington State Dairy Council, elementary-age kids can be a nutrition sleuth and find the missing nutrient, play the Grab a Grape game and test their food knowledge, or build a menu and see how nutritious it is.

Let Students Plan the Menu (135 words)

Work with teachers to discuss with their class the components of a healthy school lunch, such as including two servings of fruits and vegetables, skim milk, and a high-protein, low-fat entrée such as grilled chicken. Afterwards, students get to plan a healthy menu to be served in the cafeteria the next day (or week or month).

When the cafeteria plans to serve the class-chosen menu, promote it as “Mrs. Miller’s Class Menu” to reward the students for their healthy choices. Besides making this a fun, interactive lesson in healthy eating, this approach might also increase the number of school lunches bought that day. The students who planned the lunch will feel a sense of “ownership” of the menu, will be more likely to purchase “their” lunch, and will encourage their friends to do the same.

Got Milk? Get Your Photo Taken (129 words)

Looking for a fun way to boost awareness of the importance of milk as an excellent source of calcium? Try this idea from Arcata High School in California — host a Milk Mustache Booth.

Volunteers set up a booth during lunch time with supplies (i.e., tongue depressors, vanilla yogurt, a Polaroid camera and film) and a display of milk cartons. They also hung a “Got Milk?” sign and a poster highlighting the calcium requirements for teens. As each student approached the booth, volunteers explained the importance of calcium as they applied yogurt to the student’s top lip with a tongue depressor. Volunteers snapped a Polaroid photo of the student next to the “Got Milk?” sign and the milk cartons. Each student got to take home their photo as a souvenir.

How to Make Lunch Special for Special Need Students (379 words)

With more and more special needs children being mainstreamed into the public school system, school nutrition programs face a special challenge. They must meet the nutritional requirements of children needing individual dietary modifications, ranging from texture and consistency alterations to caloric adaptations, tube feeding and food restrictions.

School Foodservice & Nutrition tackled this topic in-depth in its October 2006 issue to help school nutrition professionals meet — and exceed — the expectations of special needs student and their families.

Because of students’ various health needs (i.e., food allergies, diabetes and various disorders requiring food-texture modifications), planning special-needs menus often requires different food preparation. According to *School Foodservice & Nutrition*, keeping these general strategies in mind may help with special-needs menu planning:

- Plan the special menu to resemble, as closely as possible, the regular meal being served that day.
- Regarding food or nutrients, alter a special meal only if the written diet order mentions nutrient restrictions; otherwise, continue with conventional meal patterns and portions.
- Consult with parents/guardians in special-needs meal planning to discover a child's particular likes, dislikes and tolerability.

The article also suggests that school nutrition professionals can more easily accommodate a host of special dietary and medical needs. How? By applying these Nutrition Integrity Standards to the entire school menu:

- Increase the variety of foods offered.
- Offer choice on the menu.
- Incorporate the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) in menu and recipe development.
- Offer more unprocessed food items on the menu.

Keep in mind that children with special dietary needs still want foods that taste good, smell good and look good. Although food-texture modification may pose the most challenge to school nutrition professionals, the *School Foodservice & Nutrition* article offers these practical tips:

- Prepare texture-modified foods individually.
- Put soft foods in individual serving bowls to avoid foods running together.
- Garnish or mold one or two food items on the child's tray to boost the meal's eye-appeal.
- Use small-and-simple garnishes, such as a dollop of whipped cream, a clear gelatin cube, or clear strawberry glaze. (*Caution:* Make sure the special diet allows such garnishes.)

For more ideas on how to make your operation safe and more accommodating for everyone, check out the October 2006 issue of *School Foodservice & Nutrition*.