Children in Dunklin County learning to Eat Smart at an early age!

by: Kim Gurley, Project Coordinator

SUMMARY
Eat Smart Guidelines help decrease the rise in childhood obesity prior to the age of 5 years through educating children to eat healthier. As a result of several daycares in our county moving towards Eat Smart Certification we strive to see an improvement in the children at the local level. By collaborating with parents, we hope to motivate them to experience with new recipes on their own and in turn, reach other siblings in the home environment. Daycare providers are encouraged by the efforts of the children and their parents/guardians with the hope to keep progressing towards increasing physical activity and certification for Move Smart.

CHALLENGE
Dunklin County has an abundance of fast food restaurants readily available. In this fast paced world in which we live, many families that can afford this option, will chose this because of the convenience. Studies show that before the age of 5 years is the target age to engage in healthy eating choices. This in turn leads the child into a healthier lifestyle category.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY
When at home help encourage your children to try new recipes and eat healthier overall! Try to prevent or reduce fast food stops and encourage more physical activity! Get your kids involved by letting them help cook, plan recipes, play application/games that talk about healthy eating/exercise, and try to limit readily available junk food at the home! Daycares keep a child the majority of the day and wants to try to improve your child's health, let's help them as parents!

""I can't believe how well the children are doing with the food changes so far! Parents are even coming in saying how they are surprised that their kid ate that food because they wouldn't eat that at home. But most of these kids are used to fast food."

- Kim Thompson, Manager, Caterpillar Clubhouse Child Center
SOLUTION

Starting with children who attend daycare, we can hopefully excite many of the daycares in Dunklin County to become Eat Smart Certified. Daycares that chose to participate in this program will be at the intermediate to the advanced level to qualify. This in turn means that if they get certified it allows their daycare to be known as “Eat Smart Certified.” The certification would be appealing to the parents when making their final decision on a healthier style daycare. As the project coordinator, I will strive to take parents nutritional newsletters that will be sent home for them to read and healthy recipes for not only the daycares to use but for the parents at home to use.

RESULTS

After starting the process of visiting the daycares to introduce Eat Smart Certified to show the benefits of this program to the daycares, children, and families, we now have 3 daycares that are in the process of getting Eat Smart Certified and 5 that are interested. As the project coordinator I have taken healthy recipes out to the daycares for them to try new foods/menu’s for the program, so far the children have loved the new recipes. Daycares are noticing that the kids are eating better than what they thought they would when they changed to healthier foods but have made it very fun for them while learning to eat the new foods. Also, the new equipment from the grant, such as the kidney shaped table, allows them to teach the kids to serve themselves with adult assistance.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

To sustain these efforts as the project coordinator, I am working with the local daycares to help them through the process. Meanwhile, I am collaborating with Mary Engram from Missouri Extension to facilitate a smooth transition into these healthy programs. Mary is notified when the daycares are approved for the program and will come out to work more hands on with them for their first year after receiving the grant and then when needed after the first year. Overall, the daycares are getting great support to help get certified!

Success Stories  http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/