

COMMUNITY HEALTH

September 2013

The YMCA of Martha's Vineyard is a non-profit, cause-driven, charitable organization that relies on the generous support of friends like you.

WE'RE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SO OUR KIDS CAN STAY HEALTHY AND HAPPY



Helping kids maintain healthy habits for well being

So parents can join with kids to create a healthy home environment and happy mealtimes.

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and we at the YMCA of Martha's Vineyard are paying close attention to what is now considered to be a national epidemic. Although the Island enjoys a lack of fast food outlets, the number of Vineyard kids who suffer with childhood obesity closely mirrors the startling numbers of the rest of the state of Massachusetts. The MA Department of Health, using Body Mass Index (BMI) information provided by schools in 2011, states that children in grades 2 and 4 ranked slightly higher in numbers of overweight or obese than the rest of the state. Children in grades 7 and 10 ranked slightly lower. But the news is not all bad. Peg Regan, Board Member at the YMCA of MV and Program Director of Mass In Motion qualifies: "We're starting to see the trend moving backwards a little."

Childhood obesity is a serious problem. Kids who are obese frequently suffer from maladies like diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, among others, that were traditionally confined to adults. Obese kids and teens also have a greater risk of social and psychological problems. They may suffer from discrimination, bullying, and poor self-esteem. And those are just the present risks. Without intervention, obese kids and teens are more likely to become obese adults and succumb to the serious health conditions that occur with it.

What can we do? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the one-two punch for knocking out childhood obesity is a focus on healthy foods and increased physical activity.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The YMCA of Martha's Vineyard is all about fun physical activities for kids. Besides the plethora of swim programs, Youth and Teen Fitness Training, and dance classes, we periodically present special programs like Healthy Kids Day that promote fitness. Our SOAR After-School Program includes at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity.

As part of the national YMCA network, we're promoting the Healthy Family Home initiative and its "Families at Play for an Hour a Day" movement. By adding ten or fifteen minutes here and there parents and kids can easily accumulate the recommended 60 minutes of moderate activity per day. (For more information, pick up a brochure at the Y or visit the website at ymca.net/healthy-family-home.)



HEALTHY EATING

This Fall, the Y Café will be working with Josh Levy, Registered Dietitian (RD), to help evolve the menu to promote healthy food choices for adults and kids. Josh is also working with the After-School Program to help design a healthier snack menu and a workshop for staff. With his wife, Prudence Levy, RD, Josh has created "Vineyard Family Cooking," a free cookbook/nutrition guide available at their website, www.vineyardnutrition.com.

Island Grown Schools is working with the children in the Y's After-School Program to bring their "Harvest of the Month" to the Y to help spread the message of trying seasonal, locally available foods to the broader community. So, we have a lot going on at the Y. But, ultimately, it's incumbent on the parents to provide the means and the example for a healthy lifestyle.



PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT

Josh Levy provides some excellent suggestions for parents to get the whole family eating well:

Grow your own food. And get the kids involved in the process. "The more time and energy they spend in the garden, the more likely they are to try new foods." Josh recommends planting fun and interesting crops like purple carrots or watermelon radishes.

Cook together. "It's never too early to get them involved," Josh claims. A child of one or two can operate a salad spinner. "There's joy in the kitchen," Josh adds. "Let them see the magic."

Eat together. According to Josh, kids who sit down and eat with parents eat better and grow up with less incidence of drug and alcohol abuse. "If it's not possible to do it every day, choose one or two days a week and make it non-negotiable."

Eat without distraction. Put away the electronics and get to know each other. If there's distraction, you can't focus on each other and the food. Josh advises, you're not learning to listen to your own bodies. "You don't know when you're full," he says.

HAVE FUN!

Light and easy does it! Experiment with food. It can take as many as 20 exposures for a kid to get used to a new food. Take a walk. You may find your child opening up to you on a stress-free stroll on the beach. Set an example and make it positive. While you're improving the health and fitness of your child, you may be surprised at the better life you're enjoying as a family!

SHARING OUR STORIES

"This was his first year at camp. I can't emphasize enough what a difference I have seen in his mood. He LOVES camp! This, plus the peace of mind I have knowing he is interacting with other children and having his day filled with enjoyable, worth-while activities, has been invaluable!"

Rachel Weinman, mother of Sebastian, age 6



Sebastian (right) and his camp buddy, Jason, enjoy the end of summer carnival at Camp Terra Mare.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Fall Session I Program Dates:
September 9 - October 19

- 8/30: Open Stage @ Alex's Place
All ages. 8 pm
- 8/31: Dayna Kurtz LIVE in Concert
8pm @ Alex's Place
All ages. \$20/\$25 at door
- Sept 3-6: Labor Day Camp Program
9am-4pm, ages 5-12
- 9/5: Digital Connectors Registration
Opens, contact Alex's Place
- 9/5&6: After-School Program Open House
For new children and interested
parents, 4-5pm
- 9/6: Alex's Place Open House for Teens
6-10:30 pm, ages 13 - 18
Free dinner at 6 pm
- 9/6: Open Stage @ Alex's Place
All ages. 7:30 pm
- 9/7: Middle School Dance Party
7:00 - 10:00 pm, Grades 6-8, \$5
- 9/9: First Day of School:
After-School Program, Fusion
and Swim Team begin
- 9/14: Nashville Hit makers Concert
@Flatbread Co. Doors @ 7
To benefit Alex's Place
- 9/20: Free Friday Feast and Flick
7-10pm Alex's Place
- 9/21: Calm inside: Complex Outside
Meditation & Discussion with
Elliot Dacher, MD 9:30-11:30am

WHAT DO OVER 1,000 KIDS LEARN AT THE Y ? HEALTHY HABITS



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Home of Alex's Place

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This edition of Community Health recognizes our partners in creating a healthier community.

