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e-news from your Children's Board

April 18, 2011

EATING & LIVING HEALTHY



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Cover Story: Eating, Living Healthy

Parents Need to Lead Children to Nutrition & Healthy Lifestyle

When 11-year-old Shania Lape sees an overweight classmate struggle to keep up, she's filled with sympathy. "They can't run as fast, they can't play the games at school because they're not healthy," said Shania, a fifth-grader at Kenly Elementary in Tampa. Worse yet, not being able to play with their classmates could lead to a lifetime on the sidelines for some kids.

The effects of being overweight or obese run the gamut from lower self-esteem to depression and anxiety. Those students also can run into academic difficulties, which can translate to less economic success in adulthood, said Tampa psychologist and University of South Florida pediatrics professor Perry Kaly. And no parent wants that. "Imagine the pressure: You already know you're overweight, and your teacher, your nurse and your peers are telling you you're fat," Kaly said. "It's unbelievably crushing. ... You start thinking you're not loveable or acceptable."

The problem is especially prevalent in Florida, where one in three children is overweight or obese, according to the Trust for America's Health. As those children grow into teenagers, an otherwise bright future can dim because of their health. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



(Photo of Kenly Elementary cafeteria by the Tampa Tribune.)

Experts say a combination of factors -- including school lunches, neighborhood norms and cultural traditions -- contribute to the pounds children pack on. But most agree children's eating habits -- good or bad -- start at home.

"There needs to be a pervasive thought inside the house that we need to eat healthier, said Denise Edwards, a doctor and director of the Healthy Eating Clinic at the USF. "There has to be buy-in from the parents." Parents can influence a vicious cycle that puts their kids at risk without even knowing it. "Some of it is cultural -- they're used to eating certain types of food and are unaware," Edwards said.

Childhood obesity disproportionately affects blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans, according to the CDC. Black and Hispanic adolescents (ages 12-19) have an obesity rate of about 22 percent, compared to their white peers, who have an obesity rate of 14 percent.

But, Edwards added, a lot of it is simply leading by example. A child with an obese parent or parents has a 50 to 75 percent chance of being overweight, too, according to the CDC. A 2010 University of Minnesota study on the dinnertime habits of families found that overweight parents are less likely to practice positive family meal rituals -- such as eating with the television off or not serving soda at mealtime. They also had higher levels of depression and fewer family rules compared to families with parents of a healthy weight.

"If I could fix the world, I'd get everybody to understand you need to say to a child that we're going to have limitations," said longtime educator and Hillsborough County Schools Assistant Superintendent Gwen Luney. "Getting parents to understand that setting a nutrition line at an early age is extremely important," Luney, a mother of two, said, "because it's generational."

It's also financial. Children from low-income and low-education households are three to four times more likely to be overweight or obese than their peers in higher socioeconomic brackets, according to a 2007 study from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Neighborhood factors directly and indirectly influence health by shaping health behaviors," said Brian Smedley, director of the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. "It's difficult to sustain healthy behaviors when everything around the neighborhood conspires against good health," Smedley said.

With the help of a federal grant, students at some of the poorest schools learn about foods they might not get at home, such as edamame or pomegranates, and get to taste them as a classroom snack. "It's not just what they're offering, it's the buy-in from the kids," Edwards said. "It's teaching them how food can help them perform, foods that help them grow."

School Nutrition Services Director Mary Kate Harrison admits there's room for improvement, but school officials have to weigh healthy options with what they can afford. Kenly Elementary in East Tampa has learned to do just that. In 2006, the school stopped selling sweets, said Mary Melvin, a guidance counselor and wellness committee chair. "There wasn't a great big uprising; we reward them with time outside, and we reward them with something other than candy," Melvin said. "The hardest people to convince were the teachers."

Kenly is constantly revamping its cafeteria menu, and the school used just one gallon of cooking oil for the entire 2009-2010 school year. The health of the 94 percent of students who qualify for a free or reduced-cost lunch has improved, Melvin said. It's also a goal that the students understand how important exercise is in their lives, Melvin said. And teachers at Kenly are trying to bring more physical activities into the classroom. And with increased awareness, teachers say, kids are making the connection between their health and their future.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2011/apr/06/060858/why-are-our-kids-fat-the-reasons-range-from-cultur/life-health/>

Achieve the Dream Stories

ChairScholars Foundation Helps Disabled Students Achieve Dreams

For Benjamin Jason Epps, school can be frustrating. The senior at Freedom High School can't jot notes as his teacher lectures and can't take a written exam without dictating his answers to an aide. He can't hold a pencil or walk to the front of the class. Math homework can be a nightmare.

Epps has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Despite this, the 18-year-old's weighted grade point average is more than 5.0. He is a member of the National Honor Society and did an internship at James A. Haley VA Medical Center. He has been accepted to four colleges and has chosen to attend the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago to major in biblical studies and translations."

There's only one problem, and it's not his wheelchair. Epps needs financial assistance to cover room and board at the tuition-free college. On April 9, help came for Epps and 33 other Florida students who received scholarships from the ChairScholars Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides financial aid to low-income, physically disabled students.

The foundation, which was started in 1992 by orthopedic surgeon Hugo Keim and his wife, Alicia, held its annual festival and scholarship presentation outside the founders' Odessa home. Speakers included former Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio, Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Raheem Morris and Bucs player Ronde Barber. For many of the students, the scholarships provide an opportunity that otherwise may not be available.

See <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/foundation-helps-physically-disabled-students-go-to-college/1162860>.



Tampa Bay Buccaneers Coach Raheem Morris presents a ChairScholars Award to Benjamin Jason Epps. (Photo by St. Petersburg Times.)

10-Year-Old Maine Boy Without Hands Earns Penmanship Kudos

A 10-year-old boy who earned a spot in a national penmanship contest despite being born without hands and lower arms is in a league of his own. Nicholas Maxim, a fifth-grader at Maine's Readfield Elementary School who writes by holding a pencil between his arms, impressed judges at a national penmanship contest enough that they created a new category for students with disabilities. Maxim received the first Nicholas Maxim Special Award for Excellent Penmanship at a school assembly. Maxim, who said he likes writing and illustrating comic strips, didn't know his paper had even been submitted to the contest.

See <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/04/06/2153465/mainer-born-without-hands-honored.html>.

Children's Board Links to Jobs, Events, Facebook, Twitter

Go to www.facebook.com/MyCBHC and see the latest **Children's Board Facebook** postings. Follow the **Children's Board** on **Twitter** at www.twitter.com/MyCBHC.

Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities - Go to http://www.childrensboard.org/jobs_volunteer_opportunities.aspx and click on the top link for updated postings in Hillsborough County.

Calendar - Go to <http://www.childrensboard.org/calendar.aspx> to access the upcoming community and provider calendar.

Local News

Objective of Pinwheels Campaign is Keeping Kids Safe

The **Children's Board** Keeping Kids Safe Partnership is actively promoting Child Abuse Prevention Month during April. The partnership is working with the state Pinwheels for Prevention campaign spearheaded by the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, which uses pinwheels as its symbol for child abuse prevention. To report child abuse and neglect, call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE. Learn more about the Pinwheels for Prevention - Putting Children First campaign at www.childrensboard.org. (Photos are on the grounds of the **Children's Board**.)



Hillsborough County's Population Is Diversifying, Census Shows

Hillsborough County's Hispanic population grew more than 50 percent and its Asian population nearly 40 percent from 2000 to 2010, the census shows.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2011/apr/14/PMENEWSO1-diversification/>

Hillsborough and State VPK Rankings Improve for Most Providers

The free preschool program paid for by the state is doing a better job preparing children for kindergarten, according to the latest state rankings.

See <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2011/apr/04/tampa-bay-area-vpk-centers-improve/news-metro/>.

Housing and Education Alliance Offers Foreclosure Help

The Housing and Education Alliance, Inc. has been selected as one of only two agencies nationally to participate in a pilot program to help homeowners who have attempted and failed in obtaining a mortgage modification. The Alliance is participating with NCLR and one of its Housing Counseling agencies to offer help to those homeowners who have worked with another housing agency and failed to secure a mortgage modification or have been scammed by a Mortgage Rescue Scammer. Housing and Education Alliance services are offered for free to consumers. The Alliance website is myhomeamerica.org. The contact is Walter Walker, director of education, at (813) 0261-5151 or e-mail him at wwalker@myhomeamerica.org. There are only 200 "slots" available to be filled under this pilot program.

Economic Climate Has Charities Anxious to Work Together

Local social service agencies worried about how state budget cuts could affect them may find help by turning to each other or private foundations. Representatives from more than 20 organizations gathered at a community forum recently to talk about their funding concerns. The Brink Foundation, a family foundation that focuses on children and low-income families, hosted the event along with the **Children's Board of Hillsborough County** and Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church.

Based in Westchase, the Brink Foundation periodically holds community forums in Town 'N Country. Most involve efforts to help area children, but Chief Operating Officer Jose Colindres said agencies were so fearful that their funding might get cut in the state budget that he wanted leaders to get together to share ideas and goals. Bobbi Davis, who works in resource development for the **Children's Board**, said **Children's Board** directors planned to meet with local legislators to make sure they were aware of the area's needs.

"They're trying to cut to save the state money," Davis said of the Legislature. "What that's doing is passing the cost down to the local community." Colindres said it was scary times for nonprofits. But they might be surprised to find they could get help from private foundations set up by people with a high net worth. Those types of groups, Colindres said, tend to reflect the stock market and give more when the stock market is doing well.

The stock market has improved enough that it may inspire more wealthy people to give, Colindres said, though they may be skittish at first. If they're picky about who they will fund through their foundations, they will look for nonprofits with strong business plans. They want their money to go toward organizations that run efficiently and effectively, Colindres said. He said that can hurt small agencies that don't have the resources to develop a business plan, and he urged them to find partners that could help them. The groups attending the community forum included representatives from the Spring of Tampa Bay, the Healthy Start Coalition, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Metropolitan Ministries and Alpha House, among others.. See <http://northwest2.tbo.com/content/2011/apr/13/NWNEWSO6-economic-climate-has-charities-anxious-to/>.

MacKinnon Receives Olin Mott Golden Heart Award

Dottie Berger MacKinnon was honored with the Olin Mott Golden Heart Award during the Friends of Joshua House Foundation annual Child Abuse Awareness Luncheon on April 1. MacKinnon helped create Joshua House and she spear-headed the founding of Kid's Charity of Tampa Bay and A Kid's Place. The featured speaker at the luncheon was Derrick Riggins, who aged out of foster care but got his college degree and now advocates for foster children.

(Pictured, below, left: Derrick Riggins. At right: Olin Mott, Judge Tracy Sheehan, Dottie Berger MacKinnon.)



See the April Family Justice Center Newsletter

See the Family Justice Center Newsletter for the latest news and events from FJC and the Sexual Abuse Information Network.

See www.fjhc.org/newsletter/April20112.htm.

Check Out This Week's Programs on CBHC Radio -

http://www.childrensboard.org/cbhc_radio.aspx3.

Children's Board Funds Microloan Program

The Hispanic Business Initiative Fund (HBIF) is partnering with the Tampa Bay Black Business Investment Corporation (TBBBIC) in an effort to provide free business assistance to county small business owners and access to capital, with microloans of up to \$3,000 for those who qualify.

This program, funded by the **Children's Board**, is designed to help small business owners in the county get free business assistance through HBIF. Once the business owner meets the necessary requirements, they will be directed to meet with TBBBIC for funding requests. This program is open to all small businesses located in Hillsborough whose owner also resides in the county. Furthermore, it is designed to give small business owners, with children under 18 a chance to access small amounts of credit.

"By hosting different programs and educational workshops, HBIF actively seeks innovative means to assist current and future business leaders in the community," said Yanina Rosario, vice-president of HBIF. For further information about this or any of its other programs, please contact the HBIF at 813-980-2765. Requests will be processed on a first come basis and the program is set to expire on September 30, 2011. The Hispanic Business Initiative Fund of Florida, Inc (HBIF) is the leading nonprofit economic development organization in Florida. HBIF specializes in providing bilingual business development to Hispanic entrepreneurs trying to establish or expand their business. The implementation of this initiative enhances opportunities for businesses by providing them with the necessary tools to build successful enterprises. Visit www.HBIFflorida.org for any additional information. See <http://madduxpress.com/2011/04/14/microloan-program-for-hillsborough-county-businesses-23704>.

Parent Advocate Helps Daughter, Promotes Better Hearing and Speech

Alex DeMolina describes herself as a parent advocate. Like many parent advocates, she became one out of necessity. Her 13-month-old daughter, Kiersta Archer, was born with profound bilateral hearing loss. An auditory brainstem response confirmed that without help, Kiersta would never be able to hear anyone talk or speak in response.



Kiersta Archer

Once Kiersta's father, Brian Archer, and DeMolina recovered from the shock of the diagnosis, they were referred to the Bolesta Center at the University of South Florida Cochlear Implant Center for auditory verbal therapy for Kiersta once a week. Kiersta now has a tentative date for a cochlear implant on June 13. DeMolina is happy for the support her family has received through Bolesta and USF, and with Children's Medical Services for helping guide the family through Medicaid and the Early Steps program's referral to the deaf and hard of hearing program in the Hillsborough School System.

DeMolina wants the public to know about Better Hearing and Speech Month in May (see www.asha.org/bhsm) which "provides opportunities to raise awareness about communication disorders and to promote treatment that can improve the quality of life for those who experience problems with speaking, understanding or hearing." DeMolina said. "Early detection and intervention for hearing loss is critical." You can contact DeMolina at alexlildemo@yahoo.com.

Neighborhood News

Town 'N Country Youth Council Earns Award for Most Successful Program

The Town 'N Country Youth Council earned the 2010 'Most Successful Youth Program' awarded by Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the Office of Neighborhood Relations on Saturday, April 2.

The presentation took place at the awards luncheon during the 8th Annual Neighborhood Conference at the Hillsborough Community College Dale Mabry campus.

The Youth Council earned the award partly on its 84 days of volunteer work in Town 'N Country helping various community groups. The 10 Youth Council teens were on hand to accept the award from Board of County Commission member Sandy Murman.



Advocacy

Commentary: Maintain Healthy Families Florida Budget

Commentary by Hamilton County Sheriff J. Harrell Reid, president of the Florida Sheriffs Association: Healthy Families Florida is a nationally accredited home visiting program proven to prevent child abuse and neglect in high-risk families. The program's most recent performance report shows that 98 percent of children in families served were free from abuse both during services and in the 12 months that followed. Child abuse is a crime that costs us all dearly, in both human and economic terms. Victims of child abuse are more likely to drop out of school, become teen parents, abuse drugs, suffer from mental illness and chronic health problems, and engage in criminal activities.

Conservative estimates put the price tag for child welfare, health care, special education and juvenile-justice costs associated with serving a single abused child at over \$64,000 a year. Healthy Families Florida prevents child abuse for less than \$1,700 a year per child, a fraction of the cost of serving victims after abuse occurs. By preventing child abuse and neglect, not only do we spare children from lasting trauma, we also break the cycle of violence in our communities, reduce the significant burden on law enforcement and save taxpayers millions of dollars.

The Florida Sheriffs Association has officially endorsed maintaining the current funding of \$18.1 million for Healthy Families Florida, because preventing child abuse is the right thing to do for our children and the fiscally responsible thing to do for all Florida taxpayers.

For the full commentary go to <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2011/apr/13/MEOPINO1-healthy-families-pays-many-dividends/>.

Florida Children's Services Council 'Capitol Connection' Update -

http://www.floridacsc.org/advocacy/capitol_connection.php

State News

Scott Rescinds Budget Cuts to Disabled Services

Gov. Rick Scott said on April 14 that he would rescind his order to cut state payments for disability services after House and Senate leaders agreed to fill a \$174 million deficit. The announcement comes two weeks after Scott informed lawmakers he would invoke emergency powers and cut up to 40 percent the rates charged by group homes and caseworkers who help the developmentally disabled.

"There are so many parents who can breathe a sigh of relief because they can get the services they need," said Kingsley Ross, an advocate and lobbyist for Sunrise Community, a Miami-based group home operator. "It's fantastic." Scott said he had a deal with the House and Senate to pay for the projected deficit. The House budget proposal included the money, but the Senate's did not.

"I was concerned we would run out of money," Scott said. "I will be pulling my emergency order and making sure that our providers have the funds that they need to make sure that they keep taking care of individuals who really need this care." After Scott's order, Senate President Mike Haridopolos said he was looking into the "legalities" of paying for the gap. "I'm very sensitive to this," the Republican U.S. Senate candidate said.

Senate budget chief J.D. Alexander confirmed that the Senate would fill the deficit, but that the Agency for Persons with Disabilities was on notice. "No agency will ever overspend its budget authority," said Alexander, R-Lake Wales. "It will not happen again." The agency provides services to about 30,000 Floridians with cerebral palsy, autism and Down syndrome. More than 19,000 people are on a waiting list and receive no services.

Scott ordered his inspector general to investigate the agency's deficit in February, the same day his pick to run the agency, Carl Littlefield, resigned under the threat of a difficult Senate confirmation. Scott's administration created another job for Littlefield at the Department of Children and Families.

The deficit — which exceeds the agency's spending authority by nearly 20 percent — is partly the legacy of lawsuits, poor

planning by the Legislature and a nearly \$20 million veto by Scott's predecessor, Charlie Crist, who starved the program of savings when he refused to trim provider rates last summer. "This gives the agency enough to pay its bill through the end of the year and means it doesn't start the year with a deficit, which it has the last five years," Ross said.

Scott's decision to cut rates sparked protests. In Tallahassee last week, hundreds of protesters rallied outside the Capitol and then crammed into Scott's office. Some group homes announced they would have to close. "Maybe they realized they can only push people so far and they can only cut so much," said Dennis Shelt, who runs Community Circles Inc., which provides services to the developmentally disabled in St. Petersburg and Clearwater. "There are people around the state who wouldn't survive the kind of cuts they were talking about."

See <http://www.tampabay.com/news/health/medicine/article1163831.ece>.

Bills Would Promote Civil Citations for First-Time Juvenile Offenders

A program designed to give juvenile lawbreakers a chance to avoid arrest records is in bills approved by the House last week and on track for passage in the Senate. Using civil citations, the program provides social services for first time youthful offenders who commit certain nonviolent crimes and allows them to take responsibility for their actions without having to enter the juvenile justice system. See <http://tiny.cc/agav1>.

The Children's Campaign 'Legislative Connection' Update -

The Florida House and Senate passed their conflicting versions of a state budget very early this year, but legislative money managers have not begun negotiating their differences and won't until after Easter. The two chambers are about \$4 billion apart in their fiscal plans for the year starting July 1. The Senate passed a \$70.1 billion budget and the House \$66.5 billion. Leadership is unable to decide on basic allocations for major budget areas like education, health and human services and other priorities.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman JD Alexander, R-Lake Wales, interrupted a committee hearing this past Wednesday to announce that House-Senate negotiations won't start until April 26. House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, sent a memo to all members, suggesting the session might run past its May 6 adjournment date.

See <http://floridacapitalnews.com/article/20110414/CAPITOLNEWS/104140316>.

Children's Artwork Hangs in Capitol During Children's Week

Thousands of paper cut-outs of children's hands were hanging at the Capitol in Tallahassee for Children's Week beginning Monday, April 4. Children from child care centers and schools around the state decorated the hands and mailed them in for the annual celebration. Volunteers spent part of the prior weekend hanging the artwork around the rotunda. Advocates hoped the display would help keep children on the minds of legislators. See <http://www.bradenton.com/2011/04/05/3087785/childrens-artwork-hangs-in-capitol.html/>.



(At right: a cut-out displayed at <http://www.bradenton.com/2011/04/05/3087785/childrens-artwork-hangs-in-capitol.html/>)

National News

Parade Magazine Cover Story: Autism's 'Lost Generation'

In the next 15 years, an estimated 500,000 autistic children like Dana Eisman will graduate out of school systems in the U.S. and into the unknown. Meaningful programs for them are scarce, and funding even scarcer.

"We're at the moment of truth to address the numbers of children aging into adulthood," says autism activist Linda Walder Fiddle. "Their lives are hanging over a cliff, and we must not let them fall." These issues are not going away, because the number of autistic adults will only continue to increase.

Today, one in 110 children (and one in 70 boys) born in the U.S. is diagnosed with autism, and the numbers have been rising 10% to 17% a year.

See <http://www.parade.com/health/autism/featured/autisms-lost-generation.html>.