

Input welcome!

Spring Quarterly Meeting—April 3, 2009: The Spring Quarterly Meeting of the DPH Nutrition & Physical Activity Project is scheduled for Friday, April 3, 2009. The buffet breakfast and networking opportunity will begin at 10:00 am and the meeting will start at 10:30 am. The quarterly meeting will once again take place at the Inn at Middletown, 70 Main Street, Middletown, CT.

The meeting will follow the theme "Where we are and where we go from here". Program speakers will include **Dr. Mario Garcia** of the CT Department of Public Health, **Dr. Michael Frechette**, Superintendent of Schools, Middletown, CT, and **Susan A. Furbish** of the Husky Service Learning—Public Health/Public Services Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, University of Connecticut. The agenda will also include observations from **Principal Sheila Brown** of Kathleen Goodwin School in Old Saybrook, CT, **Principal Amy Clark** of Middletown's Spencer School, as well as comments from some of the implementation teachers including **Bonnie Gaboury**, **Colleen Cardinal**, and **Amanda Ammanis**. **If you wish to attend the meeting, please contact Program Manager Marie Russell at russelm@chc1.com.**

Teacher Focus Groups: Dates will soon be announced for the four Teacher Focus Groups that will be conducted in late April and early May. We welcome input from teachers, input from parents and other stakeholders and want to hear from the decision-makers at the local level as to what sort of impact this project may have for the future.

Teacher Focus Group Meetings: Dates will soon be announced for the Teacher Focus Group Meetings that will take place in late April and early May. These meetings, which will be conducted by staff from the Yale Consultation Center, will serve to gather information directly from the classroom teachers who are implementing the pilot curricula. There will be a separate meeting for each curriculum: Food is Elementary, Family Cook, Recess Rocks™ and SPARK. Teachers from the eight intervention schools will be expected to attend the focus group meeting for their respective curriculum.

SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, June 4, 2009
WEITZMAN SYMPOSIUM
Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT



"Breakfast at the Capitol"
 January 14, 2009 Program Forum, Hartford, CT



Food & Fitness

Nutrition & Physical Activity Program SPRING 2009 Newsletter



School Programs Help Combat Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity poses a serious threat to our nation's health, health care system and economy. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "In the United States, the obesity rate is more than four times higher among children ages 6 to 11 than it was a generation ago. During that same period, the rate has more than tripled among adolescents ages 12 to 19 and more than doubled among children ages 2 to 5. Today, nearly one-third of our nation's children and adolescents are either overweight or obese, placing them at increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many other serious health conditions. Preventing obesity during childhood is critical, as research shows that obese adolescents have up to an 80 percent chance of becoming obese adults".

Through support from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut Cancer Partnership, the Community Health Center's **Food & Fitness Program** is testing curricula designed to support healthier eating and physical activity in elementary schools. In June, at the conclusion of this one-year study, the **Food & Fitness Program** will make recommendations to the DPH regarding ways for schools throughout the state to implement wellness curriculum and healthy living. The recommendations will derive from input gathered through the ongoing participatory evaluation that is being led by the Yale University Consultation Center.



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SPRING 2009

Food & Fitness

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
**Nutrition & Physical
 Activity Program**



This publication is sponsored by grant #2008-0321 from the DPH.

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Research Supports Recess!

By Julie Deak, Recess Rocks™ Trainer

In 2007 The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation surveyed 1,055 schools and found that the number one opportunity to promote physical activity in schools, reaching the most children, for the most number of minutes, is recess. Recess Rocks™ takes full advantage of this underused opportunity. This winter, our 8 schools have been enjoying Recess Rocks™ classes once a week with a wide array of movement forms including Tai chi, Breakdance, Nia, Hip Hop, Yoga and Latin Body Movement. The children appreciate the variety and the fresh faces and have been eager to participate. Teachers, principals, and aides have been seen dancing right along-side the children, which the kids love. And parents have given their positive feedback as well, such as Monica Belyea, parent of a Kindergarten student at Farm Hill School who recently wrote:

"One of the noticeable Kindergarten transitions for my daughter was the decrease in gross motor activity. Her teacher does a nice job of including movement in their daily routine but there isn't time

in the school day for the children to really get moving. Recess Rocks™ makes the most of the recess time by getting the children active and having fun. My daughter says 'I love Miss Kim and it's really fun!' With the increasing rates of child obesity and achievement gap, adding back some physical activity in the school day is one way to help our children live healthier and in turn be more successful in school."

Recess Rocks™ supports teacher's efforts to promote active learning by offering half hour movement sessions that tie into particular units those teachers are presenting. In April we will be conducting at least 2 special sessions in each classroom covering a range of 7 different topics such as "Muscles & Bones"—science, "Punctuation"—language arts, and "Measuring"—math.

And lastly, scheduling is underway for the Recess Rocks™ family dance parties; celebrations that will allow the children to share what they have learned with their families and enjoy dancing together, healthy snacks and games.



FamilyCook Productions Encourages Community Partnerships

By Lynn Fredericks, FamilyCook Founder

Give even a top notch instructor the challenge of cooking three recipes of Nigerian Chicken Stew with 20 young children in a typical school environment and they might rightly balk at the prospect. When this challenge confronted FamilyCook's partner, the **YMCA of Greater Rochester** in 2004, they turned to another community partner, local **HMO Preferred Care**, for some extra hands: the group known as the **Silver Sneakers**. This was a group of retired community members who wanted to volunteer with their HMO! These energetic individuals with time on their hands, swooped in to the rescue of the YMCA's after school "Look Who's Cooking" program designed by FamilyCook Productions.

The Silver Sneaks partnership proved an enduring one, not unlike several of the key partnerships that the Rochester YMCAs managed to create to support the logistics of their ambitious program. **Wegmans Food Markets**, the leading grocer in the area, was another traditional supporter of the Ys. Soon Wegmans was helping with food costs. This partnership took even a more advantageous direction when Wegmans introduced the Ys to **Foodlink**, another charity they supported. Foodlink is the local food bank, and a supplier of food. YMCAs rewrote the specifications for the snack policy and after the 2nd try, Foodlink won the bid and became the cost-effective food supplier for all food served in the Y after school programs.

Observing these local connections that served to support the program sustainability, we had an epiphany about sustainability at FamilyCook. It became clear that we would do our best to help link our program providers to volunteers, food suppliers, local chefs, community gardeners, etc. This has proven successful in program across the Northeast. From Connecticut to New York, from DC to Maryland, our programs have thrived where community organizations are invited to roll up their sleeves and experience helping youngsters experience the five flavors of Thai cuisine or the thrill of making a ravioli with their parents.



It's A Team Effort Folks!

By Jeff Mushkin, SPARK Master Trainer

Family and community involvement is one of the eight components of coordinated school health. Parents, families, and community members can play an important role in support of student learning, and when that happens, the health and well-being of students is positively affected.

Schools can do their share by developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. But reaching students with the message about the importance of physical activity isn't enough. Families must also do their part by offering children opportunities to increase activity levels and develop healthy behaviors.

What can YOU do to involve families and the community? How about inviting family and community members to participate in your physical education program? Host a SPARK Family Fitness Night! This is not only a way to promote healthy families, but to educate parents about the importance of physical activity while showcasing the quality programming your school provides. Parents can learn the importance of being involved in their child's health and wellness, and kids will enjoy being active with their families. Imagine the excitement students will have showing their parents and siblings the fun things they have learned in class. Hopefully, after participating in the event together, parents will try the activities at home!

