

Healthy lifestyle campaign aimed at children

Congratulations to the town schools for participating in the Fun 2B Fit healthy habits program, sponsored by Univera Healthcare's Fun 2B Fit program.

Since its inception, more than 16,000 second-, third- and fourth-graders in 60 schools across Western New York have participated. The program, which has been used in the Cheektowaga Central and Cleveland Hill school districts, is a 12-week initiative designed to encourage students in grades two, three and four to make healthier choices by trying new foods, increasing their level of physical activity, shopping for healthy foods and preparing meals together.

It's no surprise to many that childhood obesity is a growing epidemic across the country. With a surge of video game sales in the past 15 years and television programming and Internet capabilities abound, children are less inclined to get out and be active. Fast food and poor nutrition are only making matters worse for a budding population of overindulging children.

Did you know that recent data showed 15 percent of children and teens are considered overweight, a number that has tripled since 1980? An additional 15 percent of kids and teens are considered "at risk" for becoming overweight. And while the Center for Disease

Control and other organizations recommend that children participate in physical activity a minimum of an hour daily, kids are actually engaging in less physical activity, particularly as they approach adolescence.

But thanks, in part, to early healthcare prevention programs such as Fun 2B Fit and others, young ones are beginning to learn again what it means to be active and playful while eating healthful foods.

Second-graders are participating in the program element called "It's Fun 2 Try New Foods," which includes taste-testing one healthful Fun 2B Fit recipe each week for the duration of the program. Third-graders are participating in a 45-minute program called "Why It's Fun 2B Fit," and with the help of staff and fitness instructors, they are engaging in a workout developed especially for children that incorporates easy, fun dance moves and stretches.

Meanwhile, the fourth-grade component involves an interactive field trip to a Wegmans grocery store. The "Eat Well, Live Well" program is a two-hour tour of Wegmans based on the Food Guide Pyramid.

With the help of those from Univera Healthcare and support from teachers and parents, children are re-learning what it means to be healthy and to have fun.

