

Students learn good nutrition not drudgery

FOODPLAY

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Douglas County elementary school students discovered Friday that learning to eat good food doesn't have to be boring drudgery. It can be entertaining.

Tanner Health Source last week brought FOODPLAY, a national award-winning nutrition theater show, to several elementary schools to help battle childhood obesity and to make eating nutritious food fun.

A cheering crowd of youngsters gave an enthusiastic response to the 45-minute colorful program full of juggling, magic, theatrics and slapstick.

"We're trying to find ways to make learning about nutrition fun and give kids the tools they need to make smart choices in the foods they eat," said Gina Brandenburg, manager of Tanner Health Source. "Overweight children become overweight adults. By addressing obesity now, we can cut down on chronic disease later in life."



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Branderburg said that 17 percent of children, ages 2 to 19 are overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The show was presented at Mirror Lake Elementary Friday morning and South Douglas Elementary Friday afternoon. Students at Winston Elementary saw the show Thursday.

The performing team of Tom Hodgskin (playing "Coach") and Ashley Beam (Janey Junkfood) found lively ways to show which foods are good and which are bad. Soft drink bottles became juggling props. The long list of useless ingredients in sugary drinks was a long banner that wrapped around and entangled Janey.

The food pyramid became a quiz show game board that brought children to the stage to win prizes for answering nutrition questions.

Each participating school received a comprehensive FOODPLAY resource kit featuring a lot of hands-on activities that teachers can do with their students to keep the healthy eating message alive. FOODPLAY was created by a registered dietitian and has played to more than three million children nationwide. It has won many honors including an Emmy Award for the televised version. Funding by the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta brought the show to about 4,000 children in Carroll and Douglas counties.

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