

# my LAS CRUCES

Your Neighborhood Weekly Newspaper

May 25 - 31, 2010



Steve McClintock photo

Sunrise Elementary recently hosted FoodPlay, a nationally touring production that teaches kids about healthy eating. Students Angel Medina 9, Amy Herrera, 10, and Arath Ronquillo, 9, laugh at a joke by "Johnny Junkfood," played by Carlton Hall, 28.

# my LAS CRUCES Neighborhoods East Mesa

Meet Your Neighbor



Shelby Shephard sells movie tickets at the Telschor 12 cinema.

J-25



## Value of 'Go' foods vs. 'Whoa' foods

By Richard Coltharp  
My Las Cruces

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That was the scene at Sunrise Elementary's cafeteria May 10, when FoodPlay Productions brought its traveling road show to Las Cruces.

The Sunrise students provided the loudness, filling the room with ear-splitting enthusiastic laughter and responses to the actors' questions.

"I give it an A-plus all the way," said Maria Lopez, a fourth-grade teacher at Sunrise. "It was engaging and very informative for the kids."

The energetic actors of FoodPlay, Tyson Savoretti, 26, as "Coach," and Carlton Hall, 28, as "Johnny Junkfood," delivered the message of eating healthy to the kids with humor and memorable lessons.

"Do you know something made completely of food?" Coach asked the kids.

"Me!" he answered, then explained the literal meaning of "You are what you eat," and illustrating the difference between "go" foods and "whoa" foods. Example: Which works better for your body? An apple, or a fried apple pie from a fast food restaurant?

What does a dinosaur tooth look like when dipped in cola? If you've seen the FoodPlay Co.Laboratory, you'd know it comes out brown and yucky.

And you'd also know that that 12-ounce can of cola you're drinking contains a whopping 10 teaspoons of sugar, or the high fructose corn syrup equivalent. A graphic demonstration by Coach and Johnny Junkfood showed 10 teaspoons of sugar flowing into a clear plastic cup.

At this sight, even many sugar-crazy kids made a "Vikes" face.

FoodPlay performed earlier in the day at Loma Heights Elementary.

"It was the best performance incorporating healthy lifestyles, food, fun and body movements," said Selena Martinez, a first-grade teacher at Loma Heights. "It captivated the attention of myself and my students the entire time."

Jennifer Coon a second-grade teacher, added, "It was a perfect wrap-up of all the information we had discussed during our fruit and vegetable tasting this school year. It reinforced everything I had taught my students!"

Barbara Storper, a nutritionist who founded FoodPlay in 1982, made the trip from Massachusetts to attend, which she often tries to do when FoodPlay visits New Mexico.

"We've shown the play to more than 3 million kids, now, but New Mexico is one of my favorite states to bring the show," Storper said.

In fact, New Mexico has enchanted Storper so much, she wants to move here.

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There's another important reason for FoodPlay to come to New Mexico. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if current eating and exercise habits don't improve, one out of two Latino



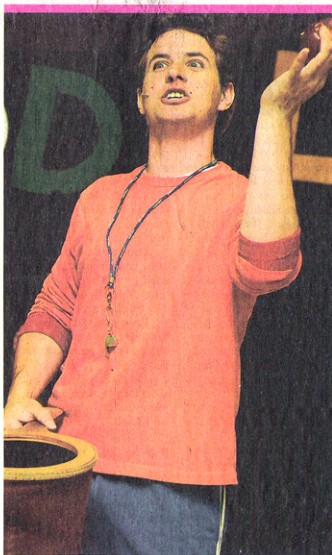
Sunrise Elementary third graders Jesus Cano, 9, Alexandra Escapita, 9 and Karina Quezada, 9, enjoy the FoodPlay performance.

Steve MacIntyre photos

### Kids

#### Top 10 Tips to Treat Your Body Right

1. Eat breakfast every day!
  2. Fruits & veggies — more, more, more!
  3. Fuel up on a variety of Pyramid Power foods!
  4. Cut down on sugar and fat!
  5. Read it before you eat it!
  6. Go fresh! Choose foods that are good for your health and good for the health of the planet!
  7. Get enough sleep and relaxation!
  8. Have fun being active every day!
  9. Feed healthy food to your body and positive message to your mind!
  10. Remember, every body is different, and different is a good thing! Feel good about YOU!
- Source: FoodPlay Productions, [www.foodplay.com](http://www.foodplay.com)



Steve MacIntyre photos

FoodPlay Productions character "Coach" played by Tyson Savoretti, 26, holds up an apple during a recent performance at Sunrise Elementary School to promote healthy eating habits in children.

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Veronique Peña, fourth grader, added, simply, "Eat healthy food."

It's one thing for kids to realize those things and another for them to adjust their eating habits, said Storper, adding that

learn, then you have to motivate them to make a change."

Richard Coltharp is editor

of My Las Cruces. He can be reached at [rcoltharp@lcsunnews.com](mailto:rcoltharp@lcsunnews.com) and (375) 541-5464.

children will develop diabetes. The odds are also one out of two for African-American children, and one out of three for Caucasian children.

Fourth-grader Alyssa Cosentino of Sunrise appeared to catch on.

"I learned you need to eat five vegetables and fruits every

kids see more than 10,000 food commercials every year, most of them promoting unhealthy food.

"So we use the same techniques advertisers use to promote junk food," she said. "First the children have to

# How do we keep the spirit alive?



**A**s a member of the Las Cruces Sun-News editorial board, I sit in on endorsement interviews with political candidates. It being election season, I've spent several

hours doing that the past few weeks.

No matter what the office people are running for, a topic that always arises is education and, to be specific, New Mexico's woeful graduation rates.

All the candidates bemoan the issue, and all say they support education, and all give at least an implied indication they can do something about the graduation rates. Except the ones who say it's the parents who need to be more involved and help motivate the kids.

But the truth is, no one has an answer.

I've heard people complain there's not enough testing. I've heard people complain there's too much testing. I hear people criticizing the Las Cruces schools (just as I've heard people criticize the local schools wherever I've lived).

To me, though, the most important thing is what's happening in that 5- to 25-foot space between the teacher's eyes and the students' eyes within the confines of a classroom.

And in my estimation, there are some amazing things happening within those classrooms in the Las Cruces Public Schools.

In the past few months, I've had two interactions with Sunrise Elementary School.

In March, I was a guest on SRTV, a brief before-school television program hosted and produced by students. These kids are amazing. They had a two-camera setup, with camera operators, reporters, directors, producers and editors, all in a room with just a little more square footage than this page.

They hit their cues and delivered an interesting, informative segment broadcast to all of their schoolmates via the classroom TVs. I answered kid interviewers' questions about Healthy U magazine, about newspapers and about writing in general. I got to lead the Pledge of Allegiance, and for about 12 seconds was a mini-star.

Then principal Brian Peterson stole my thunder when he stepped in front of the camera to scold students about some cafeteria shenanigans that had taken place the day



Steve Macintyre photos

**FoodPlay Productions character 'Johnny Junkfood' played by Carlton Hall, 28, involves Sunrise elementary students into the performance. From left: Fourth graders Brisa Moreno, 10, Idali Enriquez, 10, Georgianna Castillo, 10, and third grader Delilah Lira, 9.**

before. "That doesn't represent Sunrise Coyote pride," he said.

Thanks for the buzzkill, Mr. Peterson.

Two months later, I was back at Sunrise as the students gathered in the cafeteria for a presentation of FoodPlay, a national touring (and Emmy-winning) production that teaches kids the value of healthy eating.

Peterson was much more upbeat on this Monday morning, wearing a cartoon shirt with the slogan "Give Peas a Chance" and singing the John Lennon melody that goes along with it: "All we are saying..."

But if Peterson was upbeat, there may not be a word to describe the mood of the students.

The Sunrise kids were so involved, so energized, it felt like they were at the latest Harry Potter movie, not doing something educational. When the presenters asked a question, it wasn't the case of two or three kids raising their hands to answer. Hundreds of kids raised their hands.

Sunrise Elementary houses third through fifth graders. If there is a problem with our education system, it certainly has not been evident in third through fifth grade, at least not at Sunrise.

But I know from observation

and experience — both as a student and a parent of students — that at some point between fifth grade and ninth grade there is a disconnect. Not just in Las Cruces, not just in New Mexico, but all across America.

In school, fueled by puberty, television and the earnest quest for popularity, it becomes horribly uncool for kids to make good grades or demonstrate intelligence.

It's something I'll never understand. The worst insult you can hear is for someone to call you stupid or dumb. No one wants to be labeled as dimwitted.

Surely there have been volumes of psychological studies researching this phenomenon, and I certainly won't solve it here. But obviously, there is something that needs to happen in these kids' lives — both at home and at school — in that window between fifth and ninth grades that is radically different from what we've been doing the past two generations.

I look out at those happy, smiling, eager faces of Sunrise Elementary and I'm encouraged by the energy, the excitement, the desire to learn in these kids. In my heart I'm proud and hopeful.

But in my head I know that all across our district, our state, our nation, in just a few years, the hope

in many of those kids' faces will be replaced by despair.

Many will face economic and domestic issues that will tear their home lives apart. Many will face pressure from gangs and other peers. Many, if not most, will not finish school through 12th grade.

We know — we don't guess; we KNOW — that of 100 American kids, 17 or more will use tobacco, 10 or more will use marijuana, 9 or more will use inhalants, 20 or more will use alcohol, several will join gangs, several will use and deal harder drugs, 15 or more girls will get pregnant, several kids will be in jail, and others will be dead. All before they get out of their teen years.

I realize I'm being way more of a buzzkill than Mr. Peterson was. The original point of this column was to happily point out the joy and hope in these kids' hearts and on their faces. Just look at them on the cover of this week's issue.

But my greater concern is to keep the hope and joy alive and strong. We've got to do something different. Radically different.

*Richard Coltharp is editor of My Las Cruces. He can be reached at rcoltharp@lcsun-news.com and (757) 541-5464.*



**INSIDE**  
 ▶ Participate in games, activities and rediscover the great outdoors at Saturday's Ciclovía event. **Page 3C**

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## Fun with food

### Touring group teaches kids about healthy eating

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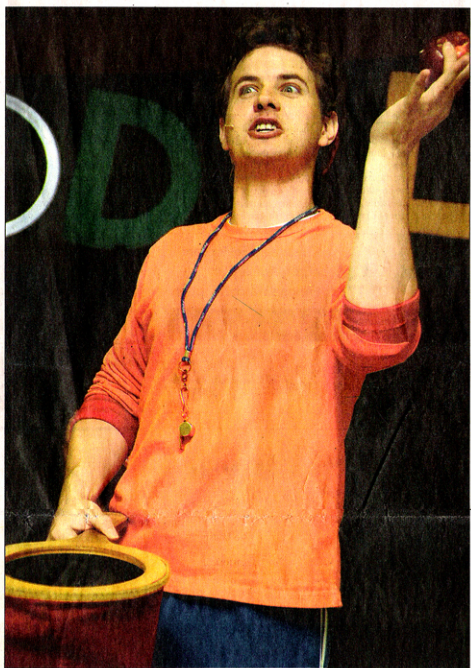
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Please see **FOOD**, Page 2C



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STEVE MAGINTYRE / SUN-NEWS

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Source: FoodPlay Productions, www.foodplay.com





STEVE MACINTYRE / SUN-NEWS

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## Food

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

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