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## **A healthy lesson**

Tracy Proulx , Daily Times

WEST WARWICK - The students at Greenbush Elementary School giggled, screamed with joy, and cheered as they learned lessons aimed at helping them lead healthier lives.

The Greenbush PTA Cultural Arts Committee brought the theater show FOODPLAY to the school to teach the students about nutrition.

"Tobe" and "Johnny" were the main characters in the production. Tobe was Johnny Junkfood's coach who was helping Johnny train so he could become an Olympic juggler. Johnny was struggling with his juggling training because he was skipping breakfast and not eating nutritious foods. Tobe taught both Johnny and the students at Greenbush how to see through the commercial ploys and read the ingredients to determine which foods are truly good for them.

Tobe talked with the students about his two favorite things, food and exercise. He told the children that there are 300,000 types of food for people to choose from.

"It's important to juggle the foods you eat," said Tobe as he began juggling various foods.

He asked the students if they knew what was totally made of food. Tobe said he was.

Then a little girl in the third row yelled, "You're a chicken?" The crowd in the cafetorium erupted in laughter - Tobe included.

Tobe told the children there are up foods and down foods. Up foods make you feel better and down foods make you sluggish. He said an apple is an up food but an apple pie from McDonald's is a down food. The students weren't totally convinced until Tobe explained to them that an apple pie from McDonalds has as much salt in it as an order of fries. The students replied with an "eww."

On average, a child will consume 150 pounds of sugar in one year. Tobe told the children that sugars will make their bodies feel like yo-yos. Johnny amazed the children by imitating a yo-yo with the balls he was juggling.

Johnny then began juggling soda bottles and Tobe told Johnny that soda was not a healthy drink. He said there were 10 teaspoons of sugar in a can of Coke and in a can of Pepsi.

Tobe said children will see 40,000 commercials about junk food on television each year. He said athletes will endorse the sodas in commercials.

"You won't see athletes drinking soda before a game or at half-time," said Tobe. He then did an experiment where he dunked a tooth in soda. When he pulled the "dull, icky, decaying" tooth out of the soda, Tobe told the students that is what would happen to their teeth if they were in soda for 24 hours.

"Be true to your teeth or they will be false to you," said Tobe.

The children learned to read the ingredients label on their food. Tobe told the children to read the food's ingredients before they eat it and if sugar is listed as the first ingredient it means that it is the main ingredient.

Greenbush Principal Mark Andrews said the students seemed very excited as they watched the performance.

FoodPlay Productions has traveled coast to coast teaching over 2 million children about nutrition.

"This fits right in with our health curriculum," said Andrews. He said the school tries to tie special programs and performances in with its curriculum.

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