

## A healthy juggling act

By **Charlie Breitrose**/ Daily News Staff

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**S**OUTHBOROUGH -- A raucous group of fourth- and fifth-graders from Neary School whooped it up yesterday watching the juggling, tumbling and singing during the two-person performance "FoodPlay," and got a good helping of tips about how to eat a healthy diet.

Janey (played by Miami native Erika Johnson) is struggling in her training to make the U.S. Olympic juggling team, and her coach Toby (Patrick Connor of Pittsfield) thinks he has an idea why she is lacking energy and can't even make it to practice on time.

"Janey, she's always late," Toby said. "You should see how she eats."

Her diet defies almost every rule in the book -- no breakfast, chugging lots of sugary sodas and eating fast food.

Eating breakfast is an important part of being healthy, Toby said.

"Something for breakfast is better than nothing for breakfast," Toby said.

To convince her that she should stop drinking so much soda, Toby showed Janey how many teaspoons of sugar are contained in a can of Coca-Cola. They counted them out with the students: "One, two, three ..." All the way to 10.

"And there are the same number in a can of Pepsi, too," Toby said.

As an alternative, they recommended the children drink fruit juice, and they could mix it with seltzer water to make their own soda.

The juggling duo pushed the food pyramid, the USDA's road map for a balanced



Patrick Connor and Erica Johnson perform 'FoodPlay' for Neary Elementary School students. (Allan Jung photo)

diet, which includes eating five fruits and vegetables each day.

Janey thought eating that much would make her "Explode!" but Toby said it is not too difficult: eat an apple with breakfast and lunch, eat a salad, have an orange, and a baked potato with dinner.

They tested the children at the end of the show by calling up three Neary students for a game of "Pyramid Power." By correctly answering three questions and putting food on the right part of the food pyramid, each one won a food pyramid poster.

Connor and Johnson appeared in Southborough as part of their tour of the Northeast with FoodPlay. Today they will visit students in Northborough. Yesterday's performance was sponsored by Neary's Southborough Organization for Schools (SOS).

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