

WITH-U Wellness Month sets Tustin Memorial Academy students on healthy course

Challenge

With daily headlines full of horror stories about the health consequences of childhood obesity, members of the “Heroes” dads’ club at Tustin Memorial Academy (TMA), a K-5 school in Tustin Unified School District, were concerned. For several years the dads had organized an annual Jog-A-Thon to encourage students to be active. Instead of a once-a-year effort, they wanted to do more to teach TMA students about the importance of exercise and good nutrition and give them information and resources to be healthy and fit year-round.

Solution

With the support of school administrators, the Heroes group turned to WITH-U, an on-line health and wellness education system, to create a program that would be engaging and educational for elementary-age children. WITH-U enlisted community partners, including City of Tustin Parks & Recreation Department, Whole Foods Markets and USA Pears, to launch WITH-U Wellness Month at TMA.

At an all-school assembly, 350 TMA students and 23 teachers were introduced to WITH-U’s proprietary online Plan Of Goals system, or POGs. Students were taught how to create their own wellness plans and log their weekly progress. Each class participated in daily fitness and nutrition education activities and tried new foods and beverages on Taste Test Tuesdays and Thirsty Thursdays. Classes competed for rewards such as Whole Foods coupons for healthy treats and “pear-branded” fitness aids such as jump ropes and pedometers. A weekly newsletter reported the results.

Results

By the end of the month, the numbers told the story:

- TMA students achieved a cumulative total 3,582 POGs.
- Students logged a cumulative 8,922 miles.
- 65 percent of students increased the amount of time spent in physical activity daily.
- 67 percent of students reported tracking their steps or miles five or more days a week.
- The proportion of students who ate 3 to 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily rose from 57 percent to 71 percent.
- Seven percent of students decreased their soda consumption from 6 to 8 sodas daily to fewer than 2 a day.
- 100 percent of participating students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The WITH-U Wellness Month was effective in promoting healthy habits.”
- 100 percent of students said they would participate in the program again.

TMA Principal Cindy Ogobian was impressed with students’ enthusiasm for the program. “It was just a great way to build our community awareness about fitness,” she said. “Students truly got their families involved in the program. Having the pedometers to keep with them and use really raised students’ awareness of their activity level. When I walked by, they would all show me how far they had walked.”

“The kids were into it from the get-go,” said Craig Shipcott, father of first- and third-grade daughters at TMA. “The program really made them more self-aware about how important it is to eat healthy and be fit.”