

## Introduction

A September 2004 Childhood Weight Status report published by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services indicated that 20% of New Jersey's sixth graders are obese and another 18% are overweight. Currently, the number of overweight and obese youth in New Jersey is higher than the national average. Many communities are largely unaware of the problem. However, by educating young people and adults on nutrition, fitness, and positive lifestyles, we can reverse the trends of poor health. Because of these factors, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Department of 4-H Youth Development identified Childhood Overweight/Obesity as a priority issue.

## Goals of Program

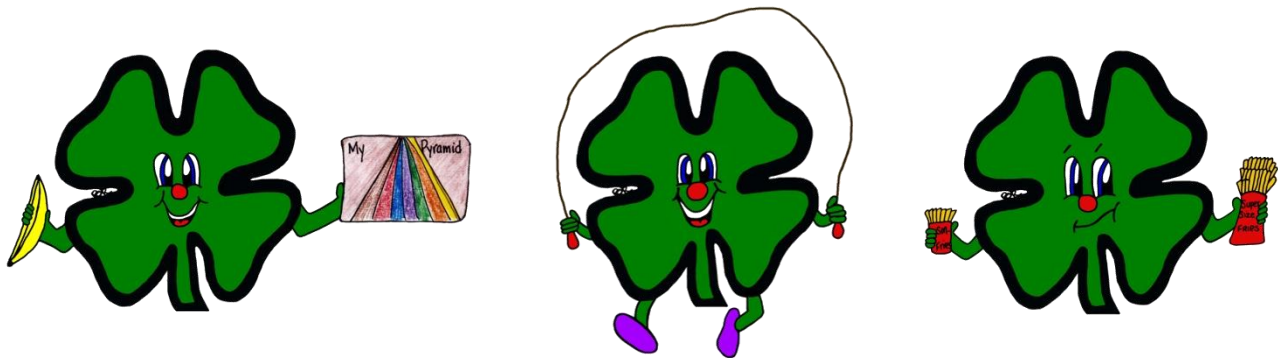
Youth and their families will:

- Understand the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity
- Learn ways to make healthy eating and physical activity a part of their daily lives
- Change eating habits by making healthy food choices
- Include physical activity in their daily lives

The ultimate goal is that youth will live longer, healthier lives.

## Program Description

The **Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H** (GMGH) action kits, display, and curriculum were developed to address the issue by providing an interactive and fun way to learn healthy eating habits, portion sizes, the Food Pyramid, and simple exercises. The curriculum has three major focus areas – understanding MyPyramid, identifying portion sizes, and learning easy ways to exercise. The kits include the following activities - Exercise Challenge, Finding Your Pyramid, Healthy Plate, Measure Up, Portion Distortion, Read the Label, Serving Match, Think What You Drink, Food Group Shuffle, and What Counts. Each has a lesson plan and provides options for expanding the learning experience.



GMGH was created through a unique youth and adult partnership. A team of teens, called the 4-H Food and Fitness Ambassadors worked with the 4-H professionals to develop the activity kits and curriculum. The teens identified the areas of focus for the project, determined the title of the project, designed the logos and artwork used for the project, and evaluated potential activities to include in the activity kits.

Since its inception in Spring 2005, the *Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H* action kits and curriculum have been used throughout the state to educate youth and to provide general public awareness. In 2007, the Department of 4-H Youth Development also focused on educating families about the importance of healthy eating and including physical activity in their daily lives through *GMGH* Family Fun Events. A new component for 2009 was a 4-H Walking Challenge. For the 2009-2010 4-H year, there will be a focus on having each 4-H club elect a Club Health Officer. The following is a summary some of our 2009 and 2010 efforts.



### Training

To implement the *Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H* program, professionals, adult volunteers and teen 4-H members have been trained. In the spring of 2010, the *GMGH* program was introduced to 15 afterschool providers at a New Jersey School Age Child Care Training.

In May 2009, 10 youth and one adult participated in a one-day training to become Food and Fitness Ambassadors. A weekend training at the L.G. Cook 4-H Camp was held in September 2009 and was funded through a grant from the Walmart Foundation and National 4-H Council. The training included 30

teens from 12 of the 21 NJ counties. The teens included 18 new ambassadors and 12 returning ambassadors. The new ambassadors were introduced to the *GMGH* activity kits that are available in each of the counties. The returning ambassadors worked on a video. All Ambassadors were trained to conduct the Club Health Officer trainings.

An important part of the Food and Fitness Ambassador training is increasing their knowledge related to healthy eating and physical activity. The Food and Fitness Ambassadors completed a pre- and post-test as part of the fall training. At the end of the program 96.7% of the participants were able to correctly identify a 1 cup portion equivalent item at the end of the program compared to 83.3% at the beginning of the program. At the beginning of the program, only 46.7% of the youth were able to identify the amount of physical activity youth need daily. At the end of the program, 90% were correctly identified 1 hour as the amount of time.

In its fourth year, the **Mercer County** Food and Fitness Ambassadors reach approximately 500 youth annually. Using the *GMGH* curriculum, Trenton teenagers and their adult advisors were trained as 4-H Food and Fitness Ambassadors at a two-day overnight retreat in April 2009 and April 2010. In 2009, 18 teens participated in the program and an additional 24 youth participated in 2010. The teenagers were from Boys and Girls Club and New Jersey Youth Corps, Martin House Learning Center, and the SEED Male Mentoring program.

The teenagers, with support from their advisors, contacted the sponsor of the collaborating programs, scheduled the *GMGH* event, promoted it with flyers, and finalized all of the preparations. On the day of the events, the teenagers typically set-up activity stations around the perimeter of a gymnasium or large multi-purpose room. Groups of children then rotated through the stations with their teachers. The stations included the ten *GMGH* activities, healthy snacks, and in some cases, pre and post-test stations.

The participating groups work as partners with Cooperative Extension to provide support for the program. Boys and Girls Club of Trenton and Mercer County, as well as, the New Jersey Youth Corps of Trenton have shown their continued commitment to the program through financial support, engaging teens as ambassadors, and by providing sites for the GMGH events each of the four years of the program.

### **Food and Fitness Ambassadors Outreach**

Teen involvement has been a key component of *Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H*. Teen Food and Fitness Ambassadors work with 4-H professionals to present GMGH at county fairs, community health fairs, and educational programs.

In 2009, a mini-grant program was initiated. As part of the program, a **Camden County** Food and Fitness Ambassador who received the mini-grant reached 134 youth by teaching workshops for Girl Scouts. She also used the GMGH program to teach special education students at Pine Hill Middle School. Coordinating a Family Fun Event was the goal of a **Middlesex County** teen.

In **Atlantic County**, a Food and Fitness Ambassador's mini-grant project was to collect recipes from 4-H families to create the Atlantic County 4-H Cook Book. A total of 155 recipes in all were printed in the recipe book. Taking it one step further, the Ambassador entered all the recipes into a computer program that determined the Nutritional Facts for the food. This information was included with each recipe. She also added information about proper portion sizes to the cook book. The books were given out to all 4-H members and their families at an Annual Awards Dinner in December 2009.

For the 2009-2010 4-H year, the teen Food and Fitness Ambassador played an important role in implementing the 4-H Club Health Officer program. They exhibited their leadership skills by successfully conducting 4-H Club Health Office trainings. Club Health Officers left the trainings enthusiastic about the program. This has been evident in feedback from leaders who indicated the Club Health Officers successfully led activities at their club meetings.

Club Health Officer trainings took place in seven counties with teen Food and Fitness Ambassadors taking a leadership role in conducting the training for 4-H Club Health Officers. 48 youth and 12 adult volunteers attended the 4-H Club Health Officers trainings.

As part of the evaluation for the Walmart Foundation and National 4-H Council grant, 4-H Food and Fitness Ambassadors were asked to tell what they learned from their experience. Below are their comments.

*-It has really been a blast!! I have gotten to go many places such as NY and I even got to give a presentation at National 4-H Congress this past year. I love presenting this workshop, I have so much fun doing it and love to work with the little kids because their faces just seem to light up when you give ideas.*

*-As a teen leader in this program I learned a lot about responsibility and timing. I also learned about how to work well with others, and about how I am supposed to teach things to different ages. The things I saw were wrong were fixed as we went, and now have become even better!*

*-As a teen trainer in this program, it was a great teaching experience. I got to teach kids of all sorts of ages on what to do. This experience gave me more insight on what it would be like if I were in charge. Some of the negative parts of this experience were that we did not have that many club members get involved in these activities.*

*-Everything went well for me. I was a little nervous at first. I got used to it. I liked that we already had the curriculum laid out and we could take a glance at what we learned. That made it easier for me to recall what I learned from our training. Nothing went wrong.*

*-Everyone was excited to learn about what it was we were teaching.*

## General Awareness

Besides the county fairs, the *GMGH* displays and kits have been used for community events and health fairs reaching 520 youth and 301 adults. Counties using the display for general awareness events included **Burlington, Gloucester, Mercer, and Ocean Counties**. These included Food and Fitness Ambassadors presenting *GMGH* activities at a 4-H Spring Fling event and at a 4-H skill-a-thon event, as well as, coordinating *GMGH* displays and activities at county fairs.

In **Burlington County**, two Food and Fitness Ambassadors presented Finding Your Pyramid, Exercise Challenge, and Portion Distortion activities as part of a health fair conducted by the Willingboro Faith in Action Ministry. One of the Food and Fitness Ambassadors noted the following about the event. *"The teenagers (12-17) were especially interested. I was amazed by how much I had to teach and demonstrate to the people who came by our table. So many people didn't know what and how much they should be eating."*

In **Mercer County**, the display was presented at the Capital Health Systems Healthy Kids Day, and at local community and school health fairs including Hopewell Regional High School, Urban League Health Fair, Trenton Central High Schools "Girls Summit," and Lakewood Township School Health Fair and Career Day.

In **Ocean County**, the display was used at Camp Lakehurst Navy Base, Lakehurst Elementary Schools Reading Arts Day, Jackson Middle School Health Fair, and Whiting School. At Lakehurst Elementary Schools Reading Arts Day, 5th grades experienced the Think What you Drink activity while the 4th grade class learned about portion control. "Wow" was the word about the sugar amounts in some of the different drinks the class measured. Participants were surprised that orange juice had so much sugar, but they also discovered other nutrients in the juice making it a good drink in moderation. Two children said they understood the labels now and would help their moms choose healthy drinks. One child mentioned it is like a numbers game. The drink has to have good nutrients to drink it and to make it count for your body.

## Youth Education

The primary focus of the *Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H* is the youth education. This is done through the 4-H club program, as well as, school enrichment and after-school programs. The youth educational outreach since April 1, 2009 was approximately 2,800 youth. The following counties presented Youth Education programs in the past year: **Atlantic, Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth, Passaic, Ocean, Salem, and Somerset** counties. In many of the counties the programs are done in collaboration with local school districts. In **Ocean County**, 4-H staff partnered with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers to provide a five session *GMGH* program to youth in grades 4-6.

The Monmouth **County** 4-H program continued a partnership with the YMCA of Western Monmouth County to present *GMGH*. In the summer of 2009, youth from the Adelphia, Tauton and Southard YMCA's participated in the program. Based on the results of a pre- and post-test of the 31 youth in grades K-3 participating in the program, 71% of the participants were able to correctly identify a 1 cup portion equivalent item at the end of the program compared to 42.3% at the beginning of the program. At the beginning of the program, only 15.4% of the youth were able to identify the amount of physical activity youth need daily. At the end of the program, 58.1% were correctly identified 1 hour as the amount of time. Additionally, 73.3% of the participants indicated they "will tell someone what you learned."

The older students, in grades 4 and older also increased their ability to correctly identify a 1 cup portion equivalent item from 44.4% in the pre-test to 77.8% in the post-test. 100% of the older students indicated they "will do something new or different." Another 66.7% said they "will change the way they think, act or behave." And 66.7% "plan to use or share what they learned."

In **Mercer County**, during the summer of 2009, 4-H staff held two week long GMGH camps for 60 youth from the city of Trenton. *MGH* was incorporated into the Mercer Safe Baby Sitters program taught to 80 youth at PEAC Fitness Club, Capital Health Medical Center and Kreps Middle School.

A **Burlington** County Food and Fitness Ambassador provided 30 minute lessons on health and fitness for a group of kids at Fernbrook Farms in Chesterfield. She used *GMGH* activities including Finding your Pyramid, Portion Distortion, Exercise Challenge and the Hungry Hip-Hop activity from the 4-H Club Health Officer Manual.

### Family Fun Events

The *Get Moving – Get Healthy with New Jersey 4-H* program uses Family Fun Events to educate families about the importance of healthy eating and increasing physical activity. Since April 2009, 257 youth and 101 adults were reached through the Family Fun Events held in **Atlantic, Burlington, Essex, Ocean, Passaic, and Somerset Counties**. At these events, youth and adults took part in interactive activities designed to teach participants about portion sizes, the Food Pyramid, and simple exercises.

At the Mullica Township Middle School in **Atlantic County**, five Ambassadors used the GMGH activities with 240 youth and parents who attend a Family Fun and Fitness event. The activities included the following - Exercise Challenge, Finding Your Pyramid, Healthy Plate, Measure Up, Portion Distortion, Read the Label, Serving Match, Think What You Drink, Food Group Shuffle, and What Counts.

In **Ocean County**, a Family Fun Night was held at the Navy Base in Lakehurst. This was in partnership with their afterschool program and open house for families. Ten families attended. Families set goals for reducing soda intake, exercising more, and eating better portions. After the event the afterschool program director said the kids indicated they were drinking a lot less soda at home. The youth also asked for water more when they had snacks, as opposed to juice drinks. The older youth asked if they could duplicate the *GMGH* exercise activity so they could do exercises a few days a week at the afterschool program.

### 4-H Club Health Officers

The primary goal of the 4-H Club Health Officer program was to institute healthy living activities at the 4-H club level. The program was made possible through a \$50,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation and National 4-H Council. Several components were involved in making the 4-H Club Health Officer program a reality.

First, curriculum and training materials from West Virginia was identified to be used at the club level. This was followed by training of Food and Fitness Ambassadors and 4-H Club Health Officers. Both trainings are described under the training section of the report.



The last step was to implement the program within the counties. The 4-H Club Health Officer concept was new to the clubs in NJ and the Health Officer position is not a traditional officer in clubs. So the program needed support from county 4-H staff. One county 4-H agent described a conversation she had with a 4-H leader who saw the 4-H Club Health Officer as just one more thing they had to do. Then the 4-H agent reminded the leader of the 4-H pledge and how it is pretty obvious how "head," "heart," and "hands" are addressed through project work, public speaking, and community services.

She pointed out that most clubs are lacking in addressing the fourth H, "health." Implementing the 4-H Club Health Officer program therefore enhances the total 4-H experience. After this explanation, the leader understood the importance of the 4-H Club Health Officer program.

In the end, 1229 4-H members in eighty-three 4-H clubs from seven counties opted to participate in the 4-H Health Officer program. Some of the success stories reported include the following.

-One club leader was enthusiastic about the program, but skeptical about the teen elected as 4-H Club Health Officer. In the past, the teen had almost been sent home from a couple events because of behavior problems. The leader accompanied the teen to the county training to make sure she understood her new responsibilities. After several months, the leader says the teen is doing a great job leading the club through the activities. This is just one example of how the program provided opportunities for youth-adult partnerships.

-The 4-H Club Health Officers embraced their role in their clubs and went beyond using the basic curriculum. A 4-H Club Health Officer in a dog project club is also the person responsible for keeping track of copies of the member's dog health records. In a horse project club, the 4-H Club Health Officer related human health to horse health by holding a trivia contest tying in calories burned while performing horse related activities. She handed out healthy snacks and gave out recipes for healthy trail mix for people and healthy cookies for horses.

-In four counties, 4-H Club Health Officers plan to work with Food and Fitness Ambassadors to coordinate GMGH displays and activities at county fairs.

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