

2nd Annual Green Ribbon Week

Wellness Roundup Special Edition

March, 2008

Nutrition & Wellness
Committee
Lang Ranch PTA

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Community Event

Great Race of Agoura

Saturday, April 5th
7am till 11:30am

Bring the whole family out for this great event! There will be a 5k, 10k and Half Marathon for the adults and also a Kid's 1 Mile Run and a Family Fun Run. Bring the kids to run the 1 mile race and then the whole family, including babies in their strollers and the family dog, can join in the Family Fun Run! Make sure you hang out for the Post Race Party, with giant inflatables, tasty food and lots of interesting booths from health and fitness oriented local businesses. Make sure to stop by the 'Beyond the Gym' booth to say "Hi"!

TAKE IT OUTSIDE!

By Debbie Aleman, Certified Personal Trainer

Benefit your mind & body by getting the family outdoors and active!

Fresh air. Open sky. The beauty of the horizon. Most of us wish we could spend more time outside enjoying nature's gifts. Now, a growing body of research is giving us even more compelling reasons to heed those desires- it turns out time spent in nature is time wisely invested in personal well-being.

Most Americans spend 93% of their time indoors. Researchers believe that too much artificial stimulation and too much time spent in man-made environments may cause exhaustion, increased rates of depression and a loss of vitality and health. The good news is that it doesn't take much time to start reaping the benefits of being outside, nor does it take much effort to reconnect with nature. Simply getting outside on a regular basis, whether for a picnic in the backyard or a walk around the block, can improve our bodies, our minds and the quality of our lives.

Time outdoors has been proven to have beneficial effects on blood pressure, brain waves and cholesterol levels. It boosts immunity, promotes a better night's sleep and encourages deeper breathing; which relaxes muscles and infuses the body with oxygen. Time outside has also been proven particularly important for those who have difficulty with attention and concentration. In their 2004 study, researchers at the University of Illinois found that kids with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) had significantly reduced symptoms when they spent some quality after-school hours and weekend time outdoors enjoying nature.

Time in nature is a breath of fresh air for people of all ages. The best part is that taking it in is often as easy as stepping outside. Try these simple ideas to incorporate the outdoors into your everyday routines.

* Grab the morning paper and read it outside while you sip your coffee or tea, or sit outside when you eat lunch. Take a moment to listen to the sounds of the birds and feel the warmth of the sun on your skin.

* Pay bills or do other household tasks while sitting on your patio or balcony. Bring your laptop outside- who says you have to sit at a desk to get work done?

* Catch the sunset. Make a point to take a walk with the family, your spouse or even the dog at sunset. Find a hill nearby and watch the beautiful, changing colors of the sky. It's a great way to relax before the busy evening takes over.

Continued on page 3...



SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE THE PLANET!

By Debbie Aleman, c.p.t.

I have one simple tip this time around that can have a *huge* impact on our environment- it's a simple and inexpensive change we all can make... *Bring your own bag!*

Households in the U.S. dispose of nearly one hundred million plastic bags annually, millions of which end up littering the environment and harming endangered marine animals. By reducing plastic bag consumption by just *two* bags per week, you'll throw away at least 100 fewer bags per year. If tied together handle to handle, these plastic bags would make a rope long enough to wrap around the earth more than 126 times!

Instead of accepting a plastic bag, try carrying a small nylon bag in your purse, car or backpack, like the ones made by ChicoBag or ACME. They stuff into their own little attached pouch and take up almost no space in your purse, but open into full size carriers that can hold over 25 pounds! They only cost about \$5.00 each, which means that you can stock up so you'll always have one handy. Go to reusablebags.com to purchase your own and also find to out more about the incredible impact that eliminating plastic bags can have on our environment! So next time someone asks "Paper or plastic?", say "No thanks- I brought my own." Our planet will thank you!

Motivating Kids to Stay Active

By Lisa Noack, Certified Youth Fitness Trainer

Sports and activities of all types offer tremendous physical and psychological benefits for kids. Unfortunately statistics show that 25% of kids drop out of organized sports within the first three years and many other kids who do not like sports are not exposed to the multitude of other exercise options that are more fun for the child and ultimately build confidence. When young children are asked why they participate in a sport or activity, their top motivational factors are to:

- “Have fun”
- “Be with my friends”
- “Learn to do my best”
- “Learn to improve (at whatever activity) and get stronger”



Responses like “win games” and “become popular” are at the bottom of the list. Young children have a more balanced view of sports than many adults! Parental attitudes and actions can enhance a child’s enjoyment, but often we can inadvertently apply too much pressure to perform and/or win. Regardless of whether it’s an individual activity or team sport, here are a few guidelines that research has proven motivate child participation in exercise:

Focus on what pleases your child in sports, not what pleases you.

Don’t try to relive your youth through your child. Some well-meaning adults invest a large part of their adult identity, their very being, in how well their youngster does at sports. This attitude *destroys* the child’s enjoyment and also the parent’s relationship with the young person.

Encourage your child to do the sport or activity he or she likes, not simply the one you like. If a child is pressured to be a baseball or football player because you like those games and instead really wants to be a golfer or swimmer, you lose in two respects: first, the child will not be happy or do well because there is little commitment and second, you’re be distracting the child from an activity that he or she might excel in - simply because they feel competent and are enjoying the experience.

Keep you child’s developmental age in mind.

Suppose your youngster seems to be having trouble shooting baskets, hitting a baseball, moving with agility around the ballet floor, or paying attention to the strategies a coach is trying to teach. Ask yourself, “How old is my child – really?” What’s his/her *developmental* age, not chronological age.

It can be comforting to realize your 9 year old, who is having trouble focusing on those complex soccer instructions, is just not quite ready developmentally for now...not forever. With this knowledge, the frustration that a parent feels at what seems to be a bad attitude or inadequate physical abilities may be replaced with greater patience and understanding.

Emphasize good old fashioned sportsmanship.

Praise your child after exhibiting good behavior during an activity because by emphasizing sportsmanship you’ll automatically put a higher priority on enjoyable, ethical participation and less value on a win-at-all-costs- attitude. The qualities that make a child a well-liked and respected member of a team are the same qualities that will help him/her get along with their teenage peers and colleagues in later life.

(Continued on page 3...)

Motivating Kids to Stay Active ...Continued

Monitor your child's physical and emotional well-being during an activity or sports competition.

Often it's the alert parent who first picks up signs of emotional conflict as opposed to an instructor or coach. Please keep in mind that *every child has a personal, inner principle of pace that drives his or her physical and cognitive development – and this must serve as the foundation for all exercise and activity.* Put another way – kids can't do what they can't do - and parental expectations have a direct bearing on the child's self-image and confidence...two qualities that can be greatly enhanced when an activity and a child are a good "fit" or greatly diminished by too much pressure and inappropriate expectations.

What constitutes a "win" is not on a scoreboard, but how we can instill that fitness for kids is for *all* children, non-athletes and athletes. Sometimes a *fit* child will never be able to experience high athletic achievement...and that's O.K. Please remember that if an activity is not fun, a young child simply won't want to do it. Keep a positive and realistic attitude and everyone wins!



Take It Outside! ...Continued from page 1

* Watch the stars! Stepping outside at night to see the moon and the stars can change the way you feel about your day. Learn to identify the different constellations and observe the moon through it's many phases. Notice how different everything looks bathed in moonlight. Listen to the different sounds of the night and notice the cool feel of the air in the evening.

Another way to refresh and re-energize your mind and body is to take your workouts outside. Boredom tends to set in with indoor workouts, increasing dropout rates— there's no stimulation of the senses, no variety! The easiest way to exercise outdoors is walking. The variety of terrain encountered while walking outdoors challenges our muscles and our nervous systems more than walking on a treadmill. Walking is the one activity we can all do; it transcends generations and athletic ability, and requires minimal equipment. All you need is a well fitting pair of shoes and off you go! Here are some tips to get you moving:

1) Invest in a good pair of shoes! Unsupportive or poor fitting shoes can lead to foot or knee problems. Shop at a store that has a trained staff who will analyze your gait pattern and look at the bone structure of your foot. Two excellent stores in our area are Road Runner Sports in Newbury Park and Future

Track in Agoura. Shop at the end of the day when your feet tend to be larger.

2) Focus on proper form. Walk with your head high and shoulders back- this opens up your chest and allows you to breathe more deeply, providing your muscles and your brain with the oxygen they need to function at their best. Focus on striking the ground with your heel and rolling to your toes, using them to propel yourself forward. Land with a light foot and step a little higher when walking on uneven terrain, like hiking trails. Focus your eyes 10-15 feet ahead so that you are aware of obstacles in your path.

3) Mix it up! Your body will quickly adapt if you always walk the same route at the same pace and this will eventually decrease your fitness benefits. Try to find a variety of walking paths in your area, making a point to include hills and trails as part of the mix. Once you've built your fitness base, you can add higher intensity intervals of jogging or power walking to your routine. This will increase your overall calorie burn and help improve your endurance, without adding any more time to your usual workout. Start with a 5 minute warm-up at an easy pace. Warm-ups are important to increase circulation to your working muscles and to help lubricate joints. After 5 minutes, increase your pace to a level where you can carry on a conversation, but you are

slightly breathless. After about 10 minutes at this pace, increase your speed till you are at an exertion level of 8 or 9 (on a scale of 1 -10) for one minute, then recover by decreasing your pace to your previous level for 2-3 minutes. Start by adding one or two intervals, once or twice a week. You can eventually add more as your muscles and cardiovascular system get stronger.

What's the best way to get the whole family outside and moving? Take a hike! Nothing turns an ordinary walk into an adventure like hitting the trails. For some great guided hikes check out the Conejo Recreation & Park District's Outdoor Unit. They offer everything from 'Wonders of the Wild' hikes for toddlers to full moon hikes and 'Saturday Night S'mores' excursions for the whole family. Check out their website at CRPD.org for details and to sign up for hikes.

Remember- all you have to do is open your door and step outside. Just breathe deeply and experience all the health benefits that the natural world has to offer!



"...BUT MY CHILD IS A PICKY EATER!"

TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE HEALTHY, TOO! BY LISA ROSS

It is very common for kids to be picky about what they eat, and turn their nose up at healthy foods. It is all too easy for a busy parent to give in and do what they know isn't the healthiest choice for their family.

According to Alliance for a Healthier Generation, 17.1% of children in the U.S. from ages 2-19 are overweight. This generation of children stands to be the first in history to have a shorter life span than that of its parents. They may complain about a healthier change at first, but this is our way of NOT letting our kids be part of that horrible statistic. Here are some tips to get your kids eating healthier:

1. **Get them excited about healthy food.** Let them touch, smell and taste and ask questions about raw fruits and vegetables, low fat yogurt, low fat cheeses, nuts, etc., and make sure they know their opinions matter. Make a big deal out of the fact that "you found your favorite veggie!"
2. **Get them involved in the kitchen.** Let them help make a great healthy recipe with whole wheat flour, for example, and make it a fun activity once a week. They will get excited to be part of the healthy creation.
3. **Give them a say in what they eat.** Help them make the right choices at the earliest age possible. Even a preschooler can learn "brown bread is good, white is bad!" If they have a say in decisions they will be more excited about what they eat. It is having them take charge of their own health.
4. **Take them grocery shopping with you.** It may take more time to bring them along, but the difference is amazing. Let them choose the vegetable for that evening's meal. Let them choose a healthy cereal. Read labels together to see what is really in the food you're selecting. Also, shopping at Trader Joe's or Whole Foods Market is even easier for the parent, because they offer many healthy choices without the huge selection of junk foods found on most major supermarket shelves.
5. **KEEP THE JUNK FOOD OUT OF THE HOUSE!** Your kids can't eat unhealthy snacks if you don't buy them. They will moan at first but soon enough they will get hungry and choose an apple instead of a bag of chips. Their taste buds WILL adjust to the

change, but it won't happen overnight.

6. **Add healthy foods to existing foods when you can.** Find ways to add fruits and vegetables to foods your child already likes. Blueberries, zucchini, apples, bananas, and other fruits can easily be added to muffins or oatmeal. Cauliflower can be pureed and added to macaroni and cheese. Spinach can be baked into brownies!

Leading a healthier lifestyle takes a little more time and thinking, but will pay off in the future of our kids and ourselves! Check out the cookbooks "The Sneaky Chef" by Missy Chase Lapine or "Deceptively Delicious" by Jessica Seinfeld to get more creative ideas for getting your kids to eat the foods they need to be healthy.

Healthy eating! Lisa Ross



Chocolate Spinach Brownies-

Ingredients:

- ◆ 1 package of frozen, chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry.
- ◆ 1/4 cup oil
- ◆ 1 egg
- ◆ 3 Tbsp. water
- ◆ 1 10oz. Package of brownie mix
- ◆ 1/2 cup chocolate morsels.

Directions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease bottom of 8 x 8 pan with cooking spray. In blender (or food processor with metal blade) puree spinach, oil, egg and water- process for 1 minute, or until smooth, scraping down sides of bowl. Transfer puree to a large mixing bowl and add brownie mix- stir until well blended. Spread batter into prepared pan and bake 30 minutes. Allow to cool in pan. (Makes 16 servings.)

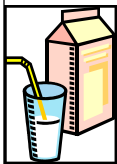
The 'Essentials' of a Healthy Diet

By Melissa Dorval, Registered Dietitian

Welcome to our second annual Green Ribbon week! As I have been privileged enough to get to know many of the wonderful families at Lang Ranch Elementary, I want to acknowledge those of you who actively promote, educate and manage good nutrition with your children and within your household. This article is being written to highlight some of the essential vitamins and minerals that are often deficient in the typical elementary school child's diet. By "essential" I mean that the nutrient is not manufactured within the body and therefore it is "essential" that it is provided from your child's daily food intake (diet) in order to prevent nutrient deficiencies and promote proper growth and development for your children.

IRON- The first nutrient I want to discuss is **iron**, which is a mineral. Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency in the U.S. It affects 30-50% of infants under the age of two, teenage girls, pregnant women, and the elderly, who are at higher risk for iron deficiency. Iron helps to transport oxygen throughout the body; produces energy; is involved in DNA synthesis and is a necessary component of brain development. It is important to note that iron deficiency may cause learning problems in children and adolescents, probably because iron has a role in synthesizing neurotransmitters. Children 4-8 years old require 10 mg/day and children 9-13 years old require 8 mg/day. Food iron is presented to the body either as heme iron, found only in animal products or as nonheme iron, which is in plant foods and about 60% in animals. Whether the iron in food is heme or nonheme iron has a major influence on the amount of the mineral absorbed. The nonheme iron is not as well absorbed as heme iron. The best dietary sources of iron are dark- vegetables and legumes. Good dietary sources of iron are kelp, brewer's yeast, blackstrap molasses, clams, oysters, wheat bran, nuts and seeds, dried fruits, and beef liver. Although (non-heme) iron is found in some breads and cereals in the American diet, much of the iron is not well absorbed.

CALICIUM is also very important for our growing children. The main functions of calcium are to build strong bones and teeth; it also regulates muscle contraction and relaxation and aids in blood clotting. As concerned parents we know how important healthy teeth and bones are for our children. Many of us think that calcium is only important to women for bone health. Actually our children are provided with the opportunity (until approximately the age of 15) to lay down bone. After that time, the goal is to maintain bone density and decrease the rate of bone loss. Since this is the time to lay down as much bone density as possible, and for calcium's previously listed functions, our 4-8 year olds require 800 mg calcium/day and children 9-13 year old (male and female) require 1300 mg per day. An 8 oz glass of skim milk provides approximately 300 mg calcium. Other milk products, such as yogurt and ice cream,



all contain various amounts of calcium. A half-cup to 1 oz of ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, cheddar and mozzarella all contain anywhere from 155 to 337 mg of calcium (check your labels). One cup or 8 oz of fruits and vegetables like broccoli, turnip greens, legumes and dried fruits contain anywhere from 56 to 300 mg of calcium. Fish, shellfish and raw tofu are also good sources of calcium. A good way to pump up the amount in your child's daily diet is via calcium fortified foods such as apple juice and orange juice which provide extra calcium. If your child does not consume 3-4 servings every day of dairy products, I would recommend checking with your pediatrician about adding a calcium chew product: L'il Critters Gummy Vites, Nature Made Calcium Chews, or Viactive chews are good choices that many children enjoy eating to supplement their diet with calcium. It is important to also have enough **Vitamin D** in the diet, to aid in the absorption and metabolism of calcium. Vitamin D is found in fortified milk, egg yolks, ready to eat cereals (fortified) and fish oils; most Calcium dietary supplements contain Vitamin D (check your label). Children's minimal requirement of Vitamin D is 200 IU/day.



Another important nutrient is one of the B vitamins called **FOLATE (or folic acid)**. Folate is essential for normal brain function and to promote heart health. Folate-rich diets help to lower homocysteine levels. Homocysteine, like Cholesterol, is found in the blood and when high, it is an indicator of heart disease and may damage nerves in the brain. Poor dietary intake of folic acid may result in growth retardation, macrocytic anemia, GI disorders, and neural tube defects (in the offspring of pregnant women who do not consumer enough folic acid while pregnant). Fortified foods such as breads and cereals are good dietary sources of folic acid. Other good sources are dark green leafy vegetables, asparagus and broccoli, brewer's (nutritional) yeast. Orange juice, beets, dates and avocado are also good sources.

Vitamins A (or beta carotene), C and E are Superfoods for immunity.

(Continued on page 6...)

The kids of Lang Ranch Elementary would like to send out a big Wrangler
"Thank you!!" to our incredible lunchtime hosts:

KARATE DAY

Hosted by **United Studios of Self Defense**

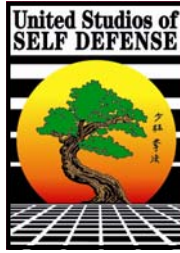
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The 'Essentials' of a Healthy Diet (continued from page 5...)

Vitamin A is important in the development of immune cells and mucosal cells – cells that line the airways, urinary and digestive tracts- tissues rich in immune cells and the body's first line of immune defense. Beta Carotene is considered "provitamin A" and is utilized and essential in the body when Vitamin A is deficient. **Vitamin C** has been shown to enhance white blood cell function and may also lower the severity and duration of colds by reducing the free radicals and levels of histamine which is a chemical responsible for congestion and stuffiness.

Vitamin E is a potent antioxidant that can help shield immune cells from free radicals and may boost the production of bacteria-busting white blood cells.



***Vitamin A rich foods:** Vitamin A is found in liver and cod liver oil. Our main source of vitamin A is from Beta Carotene rich foods such as yellow and green leafy vegetables including carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, squash, and yellow fruits such as peaches and cantaloupe.

***Vitamin C rich foods:** Oranges and other citrus fruits, kiwi, cantaloupe, papaya, red and green bell peppers, mango and tomatoes.

***Vitamin E rich foods:** Found in a variety of vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, green leafy vegetables and fortified cereals.

Your kids may well have a very nutritious diet, however, you may wish to consider a daily multivitamin with minerals and extra calcium to assure that there are no nutrient deficiencies. I realize this is a bit more scientific than the previous articles that I have written; if you have any questions about this article please let me know.

Take care and be well! Melissa Dorval, R.D.



Nutrition & Wellness Committee

Lang Ranch PTA

Thank You to our Green Ribbon Week Sponsors!

We would like to thank all of our generous sponsors for helping to make Green Ribbon Week a success!

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Prizes provided by:

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