



Wellness Roundup

Volume 3, Issue 1

November 2008

Nutrition & Wellness Committee Lang Ranch PTA

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Helpful Websites:

- ♦ www.cookinglight.com
- ♦ www.eatingwell.com

These are both great websites for finding healthier alternatives for all your holiday (and everyday!) favorites.

- ♦ <http://kidnetic.com>

This is an awesome website for both kids and parents! Kidnetic.com tells you cool stuff about how your body works, how eating right helps you feel good and play better, and how staying active is lots of fun! It's colorful, fun & informative with lots of kid friendly recipes, active games, fitness challenges and more!



A GOOD SNACK IS A HEALTHY ONE! BY LISA ROSS

Not only is snacking between meals OK, it can actually be good for our kids. According to studies done at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, snacking during the school day and after school improves mood and motivation, and may impact concentration. Snacks may help kids maintain good performance during times of high mental demand, and may also prevent overeating at dinner time. *But*, the foods need to be nutrient-dense and not full of empty calories. According to professor of nutrition Marjorie Livingston, if a

snack is over 250 calories per serving, it probably has too much of the wrong things.

Read the label when choosing snacks for your child. If the ingredients include the word "hydrogenated", the snack should be avoided. Whole grain is a more nutritious choice than enriched white flour and "high fructose corn syrup" is another ingredient to avoid in a snack. Try to choose whole foods; they are always a more nutritious choice than processed convenience foods!

Even if your child is battling a weight problem, they should still be able to snack. Just use portion control and include the snack calories as part of their total for the day.

Here are some great healthy snack ideas... hopefully your children will find at least one or two that they will love!

- * Peel a banana, dip it in yogurt, roll it in crushed cereal and freeze it.
- * Put peanut butter on apples or celery... add raisins if desired.

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FUN & HEALTHY IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM BIRTHDAYS!

BY DEBBIE ALEMAN, CERTIFIED PERSONAL TRAINER

Birthdays are special days for everyone, whether you're turning 5 or 75, and we all want our friends to share these special occasions with us. For kids, bringing in a treat to share with their classmates is a long standing tradition, but unfortunately for many children and parents, these "treats" are just another obstacle in their battle against obesity and it's devastating effects on kid's physical and psychological well-being.

When it comes to childhood obesity, no one factor is to blame, but we can all be instrumental in helping to stop

this condition. If we work as a team- a 'family' consisting of parents, kids and teachers, we can create an environment that celebrates our children, while respecting the needs of other children struggling to be healthier. Let's think outside the 'donut box' and find fun and creative alternatives to Krispy Kremes and cupcakes. Now, I'm not suggesting packs of carrot sticks- I did say "fun" alternatives! Try bringing non-food items as birthday treats. There are many affordable options, depending on your child's age and interests... Here are a few just about any

kid would love!

***Custom CD's:** Have the birthday child make a playlist of their favorite songs and burn it onto a CD for each of their classmates.

***Bubbles or Jump Ropes:** Younger kids especially love bubbles. Clear it with the teacher ahead of time and spend the last 10 minutes before lunch or before the end of school having a huge bubble chase or a jump off with their new jump ropes. It's a lot of fun & great exercise, too!

***Beach Balls or Frisbees:** These toys are kid favorites that can easily be customized with the

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HEALTHY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS . . . CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

names of their classmates using craft paint or markers. Or bring the markers along for the kids to custom decorate them in class! (Don't forget to clear it with their teacher first!)

*Fun Pencils & Colorful Notepads

***Custom Coloring Books:** You can print coloring pages from the internet and bind them together with ribbon to make into a fun book. You can also include word searches, crossword puzzles or other fun mind games.

*Art Supplies or Craft Sets

Try sources like Big Lots, Oriental Trading Company and close-out or after-holiday specials. These treats may take a little extra planning and effort to put together but they are more personal, fun and long lasting than a cupcake!

If you do decide that a treat is the only way to go, try some of these alternatives:

***Mini Cupcakes:** Instead of picking up the grocery store cupcakes with an inch plus of sugary frosting, try making your own mini versions at home. A standard cupcake with 2 tablespoons of frosting averages 400 calories and 15 grams of fat.

Mini cupcakes have about 1/3 the calories and fat, while still being a festive treat that's just right for a child-size appetite.

***Mini Carmel Apples:** Carmel apples are a popular fall treat- try making kid-sized versions by using the small Granny Smith or Gala apples currently available in the markets. Kids will get all the fiber and vitamins of the apple while still enjoying a sweet treat.

Another helpful step is to package the treats individually and have the birthday boy or girl hand them out at the end of the day, instead of before lunch. Children have a small stomach capacity (not to mention a limited attention span at lunch!) and it doesn't take much to fill them up enough to dump their healthy lunch in the garbage and head straight to the playground with their friends. Unfortunately, this sets them up for a sugar crash in the afternoon, which doesn't do good things for their grades or their moods! Giving out the treat at the end of the day also helps parents be aware of what their kids are getting in school. There are sometimes several birthdays in the same week (sometimes

even in the same day!) and while the occasional treat is fine for most kids, having 3 or 4 in a week can undo a lot of healthy habits at home. If parents are more aware of what their kids are receiving at school, they can make adjustments in their child's other food choices to help compensate for these extra sweets.

*Let's try to all work together to make our birthday Wrangler's feel special, while also helping **all** the children have happy and **healthy** birthdays in their future!*



****For more tasty, yet healthy, birthday treat ideas, please refer to Karen Begun's article "Healthy Recipes for School Birthday Celebrations" in our March 2007 edition of the Wellness Roundup, which is now available on our PTA website. Just log onto www.LangRanchpta.org, click on the 'Other PTA Services' link, go to 'Nutrition & Wellness' and open 'March 2007'.**

Holiday Tips To Help Save The Planet! By Debbie Aleman, cpt

The holiday season is approaching fast and with it comes schedules jammed with parties, decorating, shopping, travel... finding ways to make your holidays more environmentally friendly might be low on your priority list. But each little change we make in our shopping decisions and our daily habits can lead to big benefits for our planet's health and a better future for our children. As with any lifestyle change, from eating healthier to exercising regularly, going 'green' is a gradual process. We have to turn off our internal autopilot and put a little extra thought and planning into our daily actions, but the effort is well worth it! There are some simple steps we can take this holiday season to minimize our impact while still enjoying all of our beloved holiday traditions. Here are some tips from *'The Green Book- The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Step at a Time'* by Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas Kostigen.

Candles: Because paraffin wax candles are made from petroleum and release the equivalent of diesel exhaust when burned, you can save fossil fuel resources, improve indoor air quality, and reduce your exposure to carcinogens by choosing 100% beeswax or soy candles. These candles are not only made from renewable resources, but burn 90% cleaner and 50% longer than conventional

paraffin candles. If just 1 in 100 households replaced an 8 ounce petroleum-based candle with a soy or beeswax candle, the energy saved could keep the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center lit 24/7 from Thanksgiving until the 4th of July!

Christmas Trees: If you're planning to purchase a tree this Christmas, the greenest choice is a living tree that can be reused or replanted. If this is not an option, natural trees are preferable to artificial varieties. Although artificial trees are potentially endlessly reusable, they are usually made from non-renewable PVC plastic, contain trace amounts of lead, and tend to be discarded after only six holiday seasons. Real Christmas trees provide environmental benefits as they grow and can be easily recycled after the new year. If just 10% of households planning to purchase a new artificial tree this year purchased a natural one instead, 44 million pounds of non-biodegradable materials could be diverted from landfills!

Greeting Cards: Purchase cards made from recycled or tree-free materials. Americans send two billion holiday cards each year, so just a 1% reduction could save 15 thousand trees!

Wrapping Paper: Cut back on wrapping paper waste by placing gifts in reusable bags or baskets. If you prefer traditional wrapping paper, try to find a brand with recycled content and then reuse any large

pieces, as well as decorative bows and ribbon, to wrap presents again next year. (Don't forget to throw the paper that can't be reused into your recycling bin!) Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, Americans produce an extra *two billion* pounds of garbage *per week*, much of which is gift packaging. If 40% of U.S. households reduced their holiday paper consumption by 2 sheets this year, the savings could gift wrap Manhattan Island!

Lastly, don't forget to bring your own **reusable shopping bags** when you go to the mall! The United States alone goes through 100 billion single-use shopping bags annually- do your part to reduce this environmentally damaging waste by bringing along a roomy bag or two that can handle all your holiday purchases. There are many stylish and affordable options available; check out www.reusablebags.com for a great selection of bags in all shapes and sizes. If you do forget to bring your own bag, ask for a large shopping bag and consolidate all your purchases into this one bag, instead of getting a separate bag at each store. (This also helps you avoid having to juggle multiple bags, possibly leaving one behind!)

We'll have more green living tips in our next issue...

Have a wonderful holiday season!

It's All Academic- Fitness and Your Child

By Lisa Noack, Certified Youth Fitness Trainer

Parents and others responsible for children have the perfect opportunity to introduce young kids to the world of fitness, which can positively impact their present and future health. Although the benefits of physical fitness for kids are acknowledged, P.E. is often viewed as an extracurricular activity. To the contrary, it is a vital component of a child's academic success.

Recent research indicates that children who exercise regularly not only have lower blood pressure and cholesterol, but they also perform better academically than kids who are less fit. Several studies looking at the relationship between standardized test scores and fitness scores show a statistically significant correlation between math and reading scores and fitness levels—fitter kids were functioning better in the classroom. Research also indicated that as fitness levels improved, test scores did as well. As kids got older researchers looked at the relationship between fitness test scores and SAT scores and the correlation was even larger, so now is a great time to instill healthy habits that can positively impact their future.

Experts who study the effects of exercise on cognitive development and brain functioning have also noticed increased emotional benefits in children who exercise regularly. Children have significantly reduced rates of insomnia, depression and anxiety as well as decreased drug and alcohol use when they are older.

At Lang Ranch we are fortunate to have an excellent P.E. program and specialists who ensure our kids get a good dose of exercise, and many kids

play organized sports or have found an alternate activity they enjoy. Here are some concepts to keep in mind when it comes to a developing child and exercise that can help ensure your child's body *and* brain continue to reap the rewards of fitness:

- As children grow, their strength and coordination increase rapidly. By age nine, their hand/eye coordination is almost fully developed, but motor skills required for biking, jumping rope, playing soccer and other sports are still a work in progress. Keep this in mind when you (or your child) feel frustrated that he or she is not "getting" a skill...be patient, and in the meantime find some less challenging activities to build confidence. Try the skill again at a later date.
- The *motivation* to try an activity or master a skill is key. Adults have the ability to delay gratification and rationalize that exercise is necessary for good health, even if it is unpleasant. Children are motivated by success and *fun*, but are unmotivated by failure and boredom. Make sure your child's activity is developmentally appropriate and keep the pressure to a minimum. If it's not fun, it probably won't be continued.
- Children are natural interval exercisers – they push hard and then take brief recovery periods. They have small lungs and hearts and high resting pulse and respiration rates, so they fatigue

quickly. Don't confuse a child's need for rest with laziness when your child attempts to meet the challenges of cardio exercise. Children also dehydrate rapidly because they generate more heat than adults, so make sure water breaks are frequent.

- School-age children love to be with their peers, but as they get older can become more inhibited and don't want to appear foolish around their friends. Sometimes what looks like a lack of motivation is your child warming up to a new activity and the other kids.

Children come in all shapes and sized levels of coordination, and varying temperaments. They are unique, creative, impressionable and honest. They crave acceptance from adults and want to please them. We live in an area where academic expectations are high – fitness can help boost not only your child's physical game, but his or her mental and emotional game. Please encourage your kids to be active, stay positive when he or she fumbles, keep perspective regarding winning and losing, and don't view P.E. lightly – it is vital to your child's health and well-being.



Gift Ideas for Holiday Health By the Nutrition & Wellness Team

It's that time once again...trying to scrounge up new gift ideas that are affordable, enjoyable and won't end up in the closet collecting dust. Here are some health-oriented gift ideas that will help encourage kids to associate fitness with fun:

•**Wii Sports or Wii Fitness**- for the Wii gaming systems. A bit on the pricey side but worth it! These games get the whole family up and sweating to video tennis, bowling, snowboarding, yoga... Lots of fun options that really give you a workout!

•**Dance Dance Revolution**- for gaming systems. This is another video game that gets kids moving so you can actually encourage your kids to play it more often!

•**Wild Planet Hyper Dash**- This fast-paced, fun game is for kids 6 to 12 years old (but adults love it too!) comes with four leveled game modes, and works for solo, head-to-head, or team play. Spread the targets around your yard or living room, then race to tag them based on the instructions the game offers. Reinforces color and number skills, but the best part is the way this game really gets kids up and moving.

•**The Wobbler**- Adapted from equipment used by physical therapists, the Wobbler balance board is deceptively challenging. Kids must use their legs and feet to maneuver balls through a maze as they balance upright. Sturdy enough for adults to use too.

•**Plan Toys Twisted Tossing Game**- This ring-toss game has a twist—if you tire of tossing the wood-and-rope rings onto straight spikes, you can change their shape for a new and different challenge. Great for groups of kids of all ages: Have younger kids stand closer to the target, while older ones back up or try tricky moves.

•**HearthSong Multi-play Soccer Station**- Use this versatile piece of equipment as a soccer goal, a rebounder, or for target practice. It's not just limited to soccer— try it with a football, baseball, Frisbee, or set of beanbags. It comes with a carry bag, soccer ball, stakes, and a pump.

•**Swimskate Subskate Underwater Skateboard**- Surf's up! Now skateboard lovers can take their favorite sport to the pool, beach, or lake, with a board that actually works underwater. That's some

serious shreddin'! The board is made of dense, buoyant foam.

•**IToys Me2**- Imagine a pedometer transformed for the digital age- that's the Me2. Kids strap on the gadget to record their steps or other motions. Then they can plug their Me2 into a computer (a USB cable is included) and play a 3D, immersive, safe online game; each step in the real world earns points that can be used in the virtual one. Step right up and give it a try.

•**Phlatball from Toysmith**- It changes from a disk to a ball mid-flight.

•**Fitdeck Playing Cards**- Each card in this fun deck has a different kid-friendly exercise. The deck includes energizing games kids can play alone or with friends.

•**Wham-O Mini Frisbee Golf Set**- Introduce kids 5 and up to the joys of Frisbee golf with this set sized just for them. The set includes a goal, 6 discs and instructions.

Don't forget classics like Twister, Cranium 'Hullabaloo', hula hoops or jump ropes.... Or how about a Karate lesson or gift certificate for bowling... *Happy Shopping!*

From the Nutrition & Wellness Team

'Reduced Guilt' Spinach Artichoke Dip By Debbie Aleman, cpt

Tempting holiday buffets are everywhere this time of year and it doesn't take much indulging to add on unwanted pounds! My strategy for surviving parties is to offer to bring a tasty, lighter version of favorite appetizers. *Shhh...*nobody even has to know! I always wait until the compliments start rolling in before I reveal my secret. This recipe is one of my favorites and it incorporates substitutions you can use on almost any recipe, like lower fat versions of cream cheese, sour cream or mayonnaise. Try these tricks on some of your holiday favorites, or check out websites like cookinglight.com to get plenty of delicious light recipes. Don't forget to bring healthy dippers like crudities, small wedges of whole wheat pita or baked tortilla chips.

SPINACH & ARTICHOKE DIP

2 cups (8 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, divided
 1/2 cup fat-free sour cream
 1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmesan cheese, divided
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 3 garlic cloves, crushed
 1 (14-ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
 1 (8-ounce) block 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened
 1 (8-ounce) block fat-free cream cheese, softened
 1/2 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed & squeezed dry
 1 (13.5-ounce) package baked tortilla chips (about 16 cups)

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 350°.

Combine 1 1/2 cups mozzarella, sour cream, 2 tablespoons Parmesan, and next 6 ingredients (2 tablespoons Parmesan through spinach) in a large bowl, and stir until well-blended. Spoon mixture into a 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup mozzarella and 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until bubbly and golden brown. Serve warm with baked tortilla chips.

Yield: 5 1/2 cups (serving size: 1/4 cup dip and about 6 chips)

CALORIES 148, FAT 5g (sat 2.9g, mono 1.5g, poly 0.5g), CHOLESTEROL 17mg, CALCIUM 164mg, CARBS: 18.3g, SODIUM 318mg, PROTEIN 7.7g, FIBER 1.5g
(Excerpted from the Cooking Light Holiday Cookbook)



***For more helpful advice on handling holiday eating, check out Lisa Ross's article "Holiday Eating Survival Guide" from our December 2006 issue of the Wellness Roundup, which is now available on our PTA website. Just log onto www.LangRanchpta.org, click on the 'Other PTA Services' link, go to 'Nutrition & Wellness' and open 'December 2006'.*



KID'S CORNER

BESIDES PRESENTS- WHAT'S
YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE
HOLIDAYS?

Winter Break is a welcome time off for everyone at the Ranch...
Here's what our Wranglers are most excited about!

"No homework!!!" Adam, 4th grade

"Going to Mammoth with my family" Jack, 5th grade

"Sleeping late and hanging out" Connor, 4th grade

"Seeing all my relatives and eating really good food" Emily, 4th grade

"All the yummy food like latkes and cake, and the fun and dancing." Katelyn, 3rd grade

"Going skiing at Big Bear" Dylan, 3rd grade

"Staying inside and watching movies all day" Jacob, 3rd grade

"Being with my family a lot" Emily, 4th grade

"Just playing and being happy" Hannah, 3rd grade

I think this is one of *everyone's* favorite things during the holidays-

"Seeing my family's happy faces!" Sarah, 3rd grade

*We hope your holiday season is filled with health, happiness,
and all your favorite things!*

The Nutrition & Wellness Committee

Healthy Snacking...continued from page 1

- * Put a favorite cereal in a sandwich bag and add raisins or other dried fruit of choice.
 - * Add granola or other cereal to low fat yogurt.
 - * Use whole wheat pretzel sticks as "kabobs": put low fat cheese cubes and grapes on them.
 - * Toast a whole grain waffle and spread on low fat cream cheese.
 - * Make mini sandwiches on whole wheat dinner rolls.
 - * Use whole wheat tortillas to make turkey and cheese roll-ups, or a hot quesadilla with low fat shredded cheese.
 - * Dip whole wheat pita or pita chips in hummus.
 - * Make mini pizzas with whole wheat English muffins, spaghetti sauce, grated cheese and pop in the toaster oven.
 - * Make a beautiful parfait by layering yogurt and fruit such as blueberries, strawberries or bananas all the way up a tall drinking glass.
- Happy, healthy snacking to all!*
Enjoy! Lisa Ross



For more nutrition tips and recipes for healthy snacking, please refer to the article by Melissa Dorval, R.D.— "Healthy Choices Made Easy" in our October 2007 edition of the Wellness Roundup, which is now available on our PTA website. Just log onto www.LangRanchpta.org, click on the 'Other PTA Services' link, go to 'Nutrition & Wellness' and open 'October 2007'.