



4-H

NORTH DAKOTA

ON THE MOVE
TO BETTER HEALTH

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

HEALTHY CHOICES START AT HOME

In 2002, a school nurse decided to act on her concern that students were not getting enough nutritious food and exercise. She approached the North Dakota State University Extension Service to see if its 4-H programs could work with families and schools to encourage their children in developing healthy habits for life.

From that inquiry, On the Move to Better Health has grown into a statewide initiative promoting healthy decisions among more than 4,500 North Dakota children, their parents and their teachers. The program uses a two-pronged approach, supporting parents so that they are successful and effective in improving their children’s nutrition and diet and reaching out to teachers and children in grades four through six with lessons about healthy eating.

Program activities for parents and children, such as preparing healthy meals together and engaging in joint exercise, can create added bridges between them. “The collaborative aspects of planning a meal, shopping and cooking together strengthen a parent-child relationship,” says Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., L.R.D., who coordinates On the Move. “A home should always be a place where positive change happens.”



PARENT ENGAGEMENT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN GETTING MORE CHILDREN

TO EAT RIGHT AND EXERCISE. WHEN CHILDREN SEE HOW MANY OF THEIR FRIENDS’ PARENTS ARE INVOLVED, THEY WANT THEIR OWN FAMILIES TO TAKE PART.

—Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist, North Dakota State University Extension Service; Program Director, On the Move to Better Health

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR ALL

Through On the Move's monthly newsletters, parents learn how they can incorporate better nutrition choices into household routines and what their children are doing to develop better eating and exercise habits in school. According to Garden-Robinson, outreach has turned parents into advocates for better nutrition for their children: "When parents started talking about the program in parent-teacher organization meetings, many PTOs saw the value of healthy goals and decided to raise funds for special snack breaks at school."

In the program's first parent survey, parents reported improvements in their family diet. A remarkable 94 percent of parents who returned the survey also said they had adopted the program's guidelines and worked with their child to set at least one goal together per week. "Sometimes the children decide to do their own evaluations," Garden-Robinson says. "When our coordinator eats lunch, the kids come by to check up on her and make sure she's eating right."

The future looks bright for On the Move with a recent expansion, funded by the Nickelodeon cable channel, to the reservation communities of Sioux County. New support is also on its way because of the federally mandated wellness policies introduced this year and a burgeoning USDA "Eat Smart, Play Hard" campaign. "I like to say I'm just one more parent who has benefited by becoming involved with my daughter," concludes Garden-Robinson. "On the Move is all about parents and children coming together for a better future."

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National 4-H Council, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize outstanding 4-H programs that work to give children in rural communities what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

4-H is a community of more than 7 million diverse young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Through clubs, camps, school-based and after-school programs, 4-H makes a positive impact on the lives of urban, suburban and rural youth and their families. Youth learn and grow through participation in fun, hands-on learning experiences in areas including science, engineering, technology, healthy lifestyles and citizenship. “4-H connects families to programs and resources to help them succeed and grow stronger,” says National 4-H Council President and CEO Donald T. Floyd, Jr. “With the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards 4-H is able to reach rural families who often find themselves isolated from opportunities and supports to help secure their children's futures.”

4-H NORTH DAKOTA

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