

Let's Move Greenbelt
Meena Somanchi, PhD, CNS, LDN

I have met with the recreation Director Of Greenbelt 3 times.

May 26, 2011: In our first meeting we introduced ourselves and she listed all the schools in Greenbelt. Two - elementary schools, One middle school and one high school. We made a note of approximately the number of children attending each school. She requested a letter of introduction and participation from MDA, so that she could introduce me formally to School Principals. MDA took prompt action and sent me the letter. Tried to get info on the incidence of obesity in Greenbelt, but failed.

Julie informed me of all the physical activities that were going on at Greenbelt Recreation center.

1. Let's Move: National Kid's park day
2. Employee health and wellness program: lunch time activities such as line dancing, yoga, volleyball etc for employees at Greenbelt.
3. Get active Greenbelt- Family Fit night.

Decided to meet with school principals to see how I could help. Director of Recreation sent out an e-mail to all school principals to meet with us on June 29, 2011. I identified 4 areas where we could help schools, and sent this out (see below) to all school principals; they were to write down what was going on in their school in these 4 areas and send it back to me before June 29, 2011.

Let's Move Cities and Towns campaign: Greenbelt [June 25, 2011]

I have identified 4 important areas for the Let's Move Cities and Towns campaign in the city of Greenbelt, to reduce and remove obesity and hunger.

They are:

1. **Gardening:** Does your school grow vegetables? If no, is your school interested to start a kitchen garden? If interested to do so, I will take the help of USDA to start a kitchen garden in your school. During summer break, children from M-NCPPC camp will look after the garden. Produce from the gardens can be used for the school kitchen or sold at Farmer's markets. The money collected from the sales of this produce can be used to buy food for food banks or conduct soup kitchens to feed the hungry.
2. **Nutrition education:**
 - Does your school take part in the SNAP program and School Breakfast program?
 - Are there any classes on health and nutrition in the curriculum?
3. **Physical activity/exercise/sports:** Does your school have PE? If yes, mention duration and number of times students have PE/week or month? Same with sports and/or other activities.
4. **Vending machines:** Does your school have vending machines for sodas, juices, snacks, healthy snacks etc.

Please answer these questions and let me know what are the programs and activities that are already running in these 4 areas I have listed above. We will discuss further when we meet on June 29, 2 pm. Please e-mail me the answers by Tuesday June 28, so that we can discuss and have a plan for action. Feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions.

Thanks,

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Chair, Division of Education and Research
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June 22, 2011

Did not get any response from school principals except from one elementary school principal who was willing to meet on June 29. No one responded to the letter I sent.

In our second meeting,

A. We identified the nutrition programs going on in schools.

1. SNAP
2. School breakfast
3. Nutrition education:
 - a) Health education walk around Buddy Attik lake in November.
 - b) National walk to school in October

B. Nutrition programs going on in Greenbelt:

1. Free produce given from November through May every year. 800 individuals attend this event.
2. Farmer's market: May through November on Sundays.

AWARD: One of the elementary schools has won the President's challenge bronze medal for Healthier schools.

We discussed about the activities of Parks and Planning – MNCPPC and how we could involve them in the Let's Move campaign.

June 29, 2011

For our third meeting, the PE teacher from the elementary school attended instead of the school principal. We had 2 recreation coordinator's who attended this meeting.

Information from PE teacher about her elementary school:

1. Heights, weights and BMI of school children taken. Out of 700 children, 110 were overweight/obese.
2. Children get 60 minutes a week of PE.
3. Cooking classes held
4. A garden was started, but flowers were grown instead of vegetables
5. For School fundraiser programs; juices are sold.
6. Stress relief classes.
7. Self image classes
8. School nurse helps out in these activities.
9. Children get 30 minutes/day of physical activity
10. and PE : 60 minutes /week
11. Most children walk to school.

This school got the President's challenge bronze medal for Healthier schools.

My recommendations:

1. Take the help of USDA to start a school vegetable garden. In summer we will request Greenbelt recreation center, M-NCPPC, or any non-profit organization such as Lion's club, YMCA, CYO, Kiwanas to take care of the garden till school starts again.
2. Request grocery stores to set up samples of their produce for children to identify them and learn.
3. In winter to conduct yoga, tai chi classes for children.
4. Either start a food bank at Greenbelt or request Food bank of Bowie, if they can help out in Greenbelt.

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