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Olympians celebrate Muskego Elementary's healthy choices

By JOHN SCHULTZ
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To the deafening chants of "USA, USA" from elementary students, their teachers and some parents — 2,000 strong, Wisconsin Olympians Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph charged into the Muskego High School gym Oct. 16.

As they made their way to the front of the gym, the two bent over grabbing the tiny hands of the pupils sitting on the floor and greeting them.

FitzRandolph is a three-time Olympic speed skater and 2002 gold medalist at 500 meters. Hamilton is a three-time Olympian runner and winner of seven U.S. championships and nine NCAA running titles. They are the honorary chairmen of the Movin' and Munchin' Schools program.

The program is a project of the district's health insurer, Wisconsin Education Association Trust health plan, and the state Department of Public Instruction. The program encourages schools to develop creative strategies to promote healthy eating and increased physical activity among students and their families.

First- through fourth-graders from all five elementary schools gathered at MHS to meet the Olympic heroes and to celebrate Muskego Elementary School's success in the program last year.

'Have a dream'

"I started running when I was in fifth grade," Hamilton told the students. "The reason I decided I was good at running was I beat all the boys."

FitzRandolph said he started speed skating when he was 5. Another Wisconsin speed skater, Eric Heiden, was FitzRandolph's hero.

"He was from Wisconsin, and I was from Wisconsin," FitzRandolph said. A young FitzRandolph dreamed of gold medals.

FitzRandolph won his first trophy, which he showed the students, when he was 5.

"Not all of you have ice skates," he told the audience. "The important thing is to have a dream."

Movin' and Munchin' is all about setting goals, FitzRandolph said. Those goals can be set as an individual or with a team.



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West tops East in prep

Muskego High School's Andy Ksobiech and Christian Stoiber participated in the inaugural NOW Newspaper Senior All-Star Soccer Game, during which 30 of the best senior boys soccer players from the suburbs squared off at U.S. Cellular Arena after the Wave game Jan. 10.

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MUSKEGO PREP SPORTS

The sports season is in full swing at Muskego High School and, if you're a sports fan, we've got you covered with basketball, wrestling and more!

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He reminded his audience about the importance of teamwork.

"Even in an individual sport like speed skating, I couldn't have done it alone," he said. "I had my mom and dad, coaches and a whole support system."

Eat right, exercise

Hamilton got down to business, asking the children how many liked soda and candy?

Her answer came in a roar of approval from the audience.

"It's OK, we all like sweets," she said.

But she reminded the audience there are substitutes.

"Instead of soda, chocolate or white milk is so good," she said.

She also had a tip for how the young students could influence their parents to buy healthy food.

"Tell your parents to shop on the outside perimeter of the grocery store," she said. "That's where all the foods are nutritional. The inside aisles are where the processed foods are."

She also touched on her favorite subject — exercise.

"Exercise makes you feel good," she told the audience.

Then she encouraged the crowd to rise to their feet and run in place. The sound of 4,000 feet pounding the floor was once again deafening.

"You guys are awesome," Hamilton told them when the gym quieted down.

She reminded them exercise can take a variety of forms.

"I had a unicycle as a kid," she said. "I also would pretend I was a horse."

FitzRandolph could not resist telling the audience Hamilton got her start running by galloping.

Now as an adult, Hamilton also has taken up new recreational pursuits.

"I've actually taken up speed skating because of Casey," she said.

The pupils also got a chance to ask the athletes questions.

In response to a question of what she likes to do, Hamilton, a busy mom, said she enjoys art, reading and her dogs.

Program part of reward

The Olympians' visit was part of the reward for Muskego Elementary's performance accumulating points, or "miles," in Movin' and Munchin' during the 2007-08 school year. Students, parents and staff accumulated points through various physical activities and nutrition choices.

The school also received \$500 to be used for its nutrition and physical education programs.

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At a Glance

Here's a sampling of how participants earn miles, or points, for good activities and nutrition in the Movin' and

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- have breakfast including fruit or vegetable, one point
- do not drink any soda for the day, two points
- go one week without soda, 15 points
- eat one meal together as family without TV, two per meal

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- participate in Jump Rope for Heart, five points
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