

# WISCONSIN DELLS EVENTS



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## Olympians encourage students to move, eat healthy

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Olympic athletes Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph admitted to Wisconsin Dells students Friday even they don't eat healthy all the time, but they promoted healthy goals in hopes students will exercise and eat well more often.

Hamilton and FitzRandolph, who both live in Madison, visited Spring Hill School as part of the state Department of Public Instruction's Movin' and Munchin' health program that is supported financially by WEA Trust, a non-profit health insurance provider to school employees.

Students in kindergarten through eighth-grade from the Wisconsin Dells School District attended an assembly during which Hamilton, a runner, and FitzRandolph, a gold medalist in speed skating, led students in a short discussion about physical activity and healthful eating. They also led them in dancing to music and foot races. Leading up to the athletes' entrance, students viewed short videos of them in competition. As the Olympians entered the gym students were coached into chanting "USA".

Hamilton is a University of Wisconsin-Madison alumna who graduated from Stevens Point High School. She ran in the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Olympics. She has nine National Collegiate Athletic Association titles, won seven national championships and is a four-time Big Ten Female Athlete of the Year.

FitzRandolph is an Olympic speed skater who placed first during the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. He has the record for fastest 500 meters in long-track speed skating. He is a Verona Area High School graduate who later studied at Carroll College.

"Suzy and I don't mind if you want to be a runner, speed skater or anything else, but we want to encourage you to set healthy goals," FitzRandolph said during the assembly.

The audience gained an inside look to how Hamilton's running career started when she ran a race in the fifth-grade.

She said her peers were cheering her on and she won, but that she noticed something at the end of the event.

"I discovered that exercise makes me feel really good," she said.

After the assembly, Hamilton said exercise has more benefits besides looking well; it helps build self-esteem, she said.

“When you do that (exercise) there’s so much more that changes in your life, and that’s what in my mind is the most important thing: is how we feel about ourselves,” she said.

Hamilton has made a part-time career out of being a motivational speaker. The rest of the time she is mom to her 4-year-old and sells real estate in Madison with First Weber.

When she speaks she tells older students how to cope with losses because she’s had ups and downs in her career. She said she purposefully fell during a race in the 2000 Olympics because of the pressure to win.

“I didn’t know how to handle disappointment because I won all the time,” she said.

Hamilton said she speaks about how she grew from the experience. She says she wouldn’t change what happened and overcoming it has helped her be who she is today.

When FitzRandolph isn’t selling property and casualty insurance to businesses in Madison with the company, M3, he’s participating in the Movin’ and Munchin’ program to make a difference in children’s’ lives.

“It’s our hope that when we come into a school district like the Dells and we talk to like 1,200 kids, we’re not going to make a lasting impression on every child that was here today, but if we make a lasting impression on 10 kids that were here today who change their lifestyles and live longer, healthier, happier lives, then it was so worth it,” he said.



*Olympic runner Suzy Favor Hamilton leads students in games during an assembly Friday at Spring Hill School. Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph, an Olympic speed skater, spoke to students about healthy living as part of the state Department of Public Instruction’s Movin’ and Munchin’ program that is financed in part by WEA Trust, a health insurer for school employees.*

Spring Hill Middle School eighth-grader Sapphire Young reacted to the message about healthy eating and activities the Olympians delivered.

“It’s smart, and kids these days don’t really listen to it,” she said.

What makes it hard for her peers to follow the athletes’ advice are the advertisements children see, she said.

Young said at her home her parents make sure she eats well — her favorite health food are salads and she enjoys chocolate for a special treat.

Eighth-grader Bryan Ugalde said he liked the program.

“It was fun getting kids in a younger age to start choosing better habits in their life,” he said.

He said its challenging to eat well because they learn in health class that portion sizes have increased while prices are decreasing.

He said Friday’s event left him wanting to compete in the Olympics or a professional sport like soccer, football or running.

Students in Wisconsin Dells are participating in an eight-week competition to be healthy that starts this week, according to school nurse Barb Maley. She said for every healthy activity students and staff do, their school will be credited with traveling one mile toward the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. Maley said the goal is for students to earn enough miles to complete the pretend 4,000-mile round trip to Vancouver and back by the time the Winter Olympics end.

The first challenge elementary school students are undergoing this week is a ban on chocolate milk. Maley said chocolate milk is healthier than soda, but not as healthy as plain milk. Other challenges include eating vegetables and fruits, eating supper at the table with others while not watching television, brushing teeth, 30 minutes maximum of television or video games and playing outside after school.

Maley said prizes include T-shirts that have been autographed by FitzRandolph and Favor Hamilton.

A committee was formed to start the Movin’ and Munchin’ program in Wisconsin Dells schools. Participating schools are eligible for cash awards from the DPI and WEA Trust for healthy activities. In 2008-2009 each of the five schools in the district received \$500.

The following are on the committee: Jodi Nelson, counselor; Janel Witt, teacher; Sheri Benson, speech and language; Bill Tofson, teacher; Heidi Swenson, teacher; Kala Kish, teacher; Brian Hartley, PE teacher; Jeanne Kahler, retired teacher; Cyndi Collins, PE teacher; Geri Jumbeck, teacher; Gail Webb, school psychologist; Greg Heller, food services director; Barbara Maley, school nurse.