



## Promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity **Movin' and Munchin' Schools**

A program of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Featuring Wisconsin Olympians Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph

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### **A most powerful prescription: Exercise**

While January often brings more people to the gym to fulfill their New Year's resolutions to get in shape, a growing amount of research is showing an abundance of other reasons to exercise.

"No pill or nutritional supplement has the power of near-daily moderate activity in lowering the number of sick days people take," says Dr. David Nieman, director of Appalachian State University's Human Performance Lab in Kannapolis, N.C.



Dr. Nieman was quoted in a January 5, 2010, Wall Street Journal article discussing the hidden benefits of exercise. Dr. Nieman has conducted several studies showing that people who walked briskly for 45 minutes, five days a week over 12 to 15 weeks had fewer and less severe upper respiratory tract infections, such as colds and flu. These people reduced their number of sick days 25% to 50% compared with sedentary control subjects.

### **Immune system boost**

And with January being a prime time in the cold and flu season, here's another reason to get moving: Exercise has been shown to improve the body's response to the influenza vaccine, making it more effective at keeping the virus at bay.

Physical activity is well known to help maintain a healthy weight and reduce stress. Now, mounting evidence is showing that regular exercise—as simple as a brisk 30- to 45-minute walk five times a week—can boost the body's immune system, increasing the circulation of natural killer cells that fight off viruses and bacteria. Regular workouts may also help fight off colds, reduce the risk of certain

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### **OLYMPIAN CORNER**



with Suzy Favor Hamilton and  
Casey FitzRandolph

### **Study shows exercise helps keep you young**

When I was thinking about the topic for this month's column, I came across a couple of studies that brought up another benefit of exercise that we don't talk about in our public speaking opportunities: It keeps you young.

While Casey and I focus on the more obvious health benefits of Movin' and Munchin' Schools—such as our keeping our hearts strong and bodies fit—we don't mention that it helps our physical appearance, too. But a study by German scientists released in December says the key to staying young involves exercise. Since Casey and I are not getting any younger, that's not a bad thing.

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## Olympians tour state to promote Movin' and Munchin'

It was a busy first half of the school year for the Movin' and Munchin' program, with rally events being held at four school districts in the fall. Large crowds have turned out for the events featuring Olympians Casey FitzRandolph and Suzy Favor Hamilton.

The new year has gotten off to a fast start, too, with stops at Lodi and Wisconsin Dells on January 8.

“Our rally events help the Movin' and Munchin' program continue to grow,” says Fred Evert, the WEA Trust Executive Director.

The second half of the school year promises to be even busier, with stops already scheduled for Cedar Grove-Belgium, Chetek, Spooner, and Washburn school districts. To have your school district considered for hosting a Movin' and Munchin' event, send an e-mail to [events@movinandmunchin.com](mailto:events@movinandmunchin.com).



Here is a recap of this school year's events:

### September 23

The first rally of the school year was held at Mauston High School, involving pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade students. A crowd of nearly 1,000 people attended, and it included students from Grayside Elementary, Lyndon Station Elementary, West Side Elementary, and Olson Middle School.



### October 13

Stop No. 2 was at the Kickapoo Area School District in Viola, where more than 400 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students took part. The event started with a boost from the high school pep band, and the enthusiasm continued as Casey and Suzy broke through red and blue streamers into the gym. The district used the rally as a jumpstart to get all three schools signed up for the Movin' and Munchin' program.

### October 14

Students from throughout the Whitewater Unified School District gathered for one of the larger Movin' and Munchin' rallies. More than 2,000 people packed into Whitewater High School to watch the rally, including students from Lincoln Elementary, Lakeview Elementary, Washington Elementary, Whitewater Middle School and Whitewater High School.

“We have a lot of activity and energy at our events, but we really hope that energy carries over and we want the kids to know that it feels good to exercise,” Casey said after the event.

After no schools participated last year, Whitewater District Administrator Suzanne Zentner led the district in getting all five schools to sign up this year for Movin' and Munchin' Schools program.

### November 23

Elroy and Kendall elementary schools teamed up for an event at the Royall School District. The intimate gathering came just before Thanksgiving, a great time to remind students and staff to keep movin'—even during holiday times.

### January 8, 2010

More than 500 people, consisting of students from Lodi Elementary and Lodi Elementary, staff,

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Movin' and Munchin' is a program of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and sponsored by the WEA Trust, a not-for-profit insurance organization created by public school employees, for school employees.



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# OLYMPIAN CORNER

with Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph



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Americans spend billions each year on face creams, nutritional supplements, and even plastic surgery in the quest for eternal youth. But the most effective technique to keep your body young may be vigorous exercise.

But don't take my word for it. These next two paragraphs are from a Wall Street Journal report, which was based on a study in the journal *Circulation*:

“Researchers from Germany first noticed that mice trained to run on a wheel had biological changes that led to healthier

cells. So the scientists decided to compare cells from professional track and field athletes to cells from healthy adults who were not physically active. Both groups had the same chronological age, but the cells from the athletes were biologically younger. They had longer telomeres—which are protective caps on the end of DNA strands.

As we age, the caps get shorter and leave the DNA vulnerable to damage. The results suggest that regular exercise helps maintain the caps as we age. Previous

research on telomere length in twins has found that exercise makes cells on average nine years younger—and the more active you are, the greater the benefit.”

While the authors of the small study (104 people) say this is not enough evidence to call exercise the fountain of youth, other experts say it's a logical step to believe exercise is a contributing factor.

And I say it's another reason for everyone to be movin' as much as they can.

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parents, and the public, attended the morning rally. A unique twist was added to this event as the Trust partnered with DreamBikes before the rally for a bike drive to collect used bicycles.

DreamBikes is a program that provides bicycles as well as job skill training for underprivileged youth. Movin' and Munchin' co-chairs Casey FitzRandolph and Suzy Favor Hamilton greeted those who donated bikes with autographed posters. The event was a huge success, collecting 68 bikes.

And later in the day in Wisconsin Dells, about 1,200 people gathered for a rally at Spring Hill School to honor the Dells' commitment to the Movin' and Munchin' program. Five schools in the Wisconsin Dells School District received awards for their efforts in the 2008-09 Movin' and Munchin' program.

## Join by February 15

The Movin' and Munchin' Schools program set a record in the 2008-09 school year with 174 schools registering to implement the program. For the fourth consecutive year, that record is in jeopardy.

Through January 13, 2010, there were 141 schools enrolled, which is ahead of last year's pace. If your school has not yet signed up for this year's program, there is still time: February 15, 2010 is the enrollment deadline.

In addition to getting your students and staff to lead healthier lives, the Movin' and Munchin' Schools program can bring your school a financial award of up to \$1,000 for future health and wellness activities.

And if you think it's a lot of work to

participate or you don't know how to get started, think again. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has ideas to help get you started. If you are interested in joining, contact Jon Hisgen of DPI at (608) 267-9234, or visit <http://movinandmunchin.com> for a registration kit.

### It's fun and easy

After you complete your program, you only need to submit a one-page Program Summary Form to DPI, which evaluates the summary forms and determines if you are eligible for award money.

The DPI will award up to \$500 to participating schools. If at least 50% of your district employees have coverage under a WEA Trust health

plan and 50% or more of your school building staff participates in the Movin' and Munchin' program, the Trust will match DPI's award.



*A most powerful ' ... continued from page 1*

cancers and chronic diseases, and slow the process of aging.

While many public school employees and students have joined the exercise parade, there is still room for more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 36% of U.S. adults didn't participate in any leisure-time physical activity in 2008.

### **Bigger impact than weight loss**

Even lean men and women who are inactive are at higher risk of death and disease, according to the Wall Street Journal. So while reducing obesity is an important goal, "the better message would be to get everyone to walk 30 minutes a day" says Robert Sallis, co-director of sports medicine at Fontana Medical Center, a Southern California facility. "We need to refocus the national message on physical activity, which can have a bigger impact on health than losing weight."

Regular exercise has been shown to combat the ongoing damage done to cells, tissues and organs that underlies many chronic conditions.

Studies have found that exercise can lower blood pressure, reduce bad cholesterol, and cut the incidence of Type 2 diabetes.



### **How to meet guidelines**

The federal government, which issued its first physical-activity guidelines for Americans in 2008, is working with medical and fitness groups to develop a National Physical Activity plan to encourage their use. The challenge is to get people to view exercise in the same way as many do their prescription drugs: Take them daily to stay healthy.

Here are the federal recommendations for adults:



- At least two hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or one hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. Aerobic-activity episodes should last at least 10 minutes, preferably spread through the week. Additional health benefits are gained from as much as doubling the minimum recommended time spent each week in moderate or vigorous aerobic physical activity.
- Muscle-strengthening activities for all major muscle groups two or more days a week.

Moderate activity can include ballroom and line dancing; biking on level ground or with a few hills; canoeing; gardening (raking, trimming shrubs); tennis (doubles); brisk walking; water aerobics.

Among vigorous-activity exercises are aerobic dance; biking faster than 10 miles an hour; heavy gardening (digging, hoeing); tennis (singles); jumping rope; swimming laps; hiking uphill; race walking, jogging or running.

The guidelines were developed by the Department of Health and Human Services and available online at [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines).