

## **Eat Right Montana Provides Support for Eating Well and Staying Active**

Since 1999, **Healthy Families** packets have been promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles to Treasure State residents one month at a time! The award-winning campaign is sponsored by **Eat Right Montana** (ERM), a statewide coalition of committed individuals, agencies and organizations. Some of the long-term supporters include the Montana Dietetic Association, Department of Public Health and Human Services (WIC, CACFP, CVD and Nutrition and Physical Activity), Office of Public Instruction, MSU Extension Food and Nutrition and groups housed at MSU (Montana Team Nutrition and AHEC). Both the Montana Beef Council and the Western Dairy Council have been longtime supporters.

The successful packets are designed around a yearly theme, ***Eating Together, Playing Together*** for 2007, with monthly topics chosen by members of the coalition. Each all-electronic packet features four pages, a press release, a nutrition handout and a fitness handout, along with some tips and tools for nutrition communicators. The 2007 packets will cover a wide range of current issues, always with a practical, positive presentation. Since the campaign's inception, the materials have been written by Billings-based nutrition consultant Dayle Hayes, MS, RD, with the exception of a 2006 sabbatical. During 2006, Mary Stein, MS, authored packets using the theme ***Eat Local, Play Local, Live Healthy***.

For minimal effort and cost the **Healthy Families** packets have tremendous reach. The packets, sent each month to over 50 Montana media outlets, are especially popular with community newspapers. They are also sent to an electronic list of over 800 health/nutrition professionals in Montana and to every state in the US. These recipients then copy the handouts and distribute them to thousands of consumers every month. Past and current issues of the packets are also available online at the ERM website. The **Healthy Families** packets are enjoyed by WIC participants, schools, teachers, Extension staff and child care providers literally from coast to coast. "MSU Extension county faculty use the packets for their monthly newsletters, for their radio spots and for informational handouts during their programs. Thousands of Montanans read or hear the positive and helpful suggestions for changes they can make to eat healthier and be more physically active," says Phyllis Dennee, Nutrition Education Extension Specialist. Dennee sends the **Healthy Families** packet online to all Extension faculty and staff on a monthly basis.

ERM has also offered an annual **Five a Day Mini Grant Program** to promote the consumption of more fruits and vegetables for better health. The 2006 theme was ***Farm To Fork***, supporting better access to and consumption of locally grown or regional produce. For the last two years this program was done in conjunction with the Montana Nutrition and Activity Program and provided seven \$1,000 mini grants to schools, child care programs or other non-profit agencies.

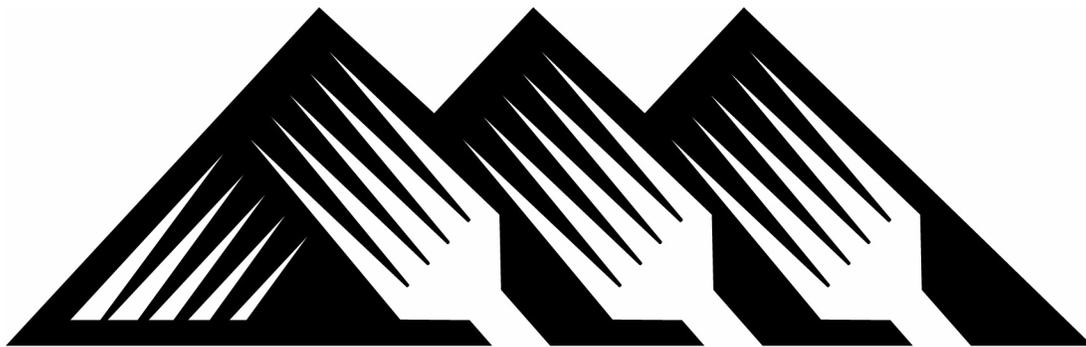
To better support Montana youth in developing healthy eating and physical activity habits, the **Montana Action for Healthy Kids Team** (a subcommittee of ERM) was formed in November 2003. The team of health professionals, education partners and

community advocates is dedicated to improving the health and wellness of our children in schools and communities through nutrition and physical activity where children learn participate in and enjoy healthy lifestyle behaviors. Past projects include the distribution of the *Fit Kids = Happy Kids* poster and handout and a mini-grant program to school parent organizations to support schools with taking action steps to create healthier school environments. As a result of the mini grant program, the *Parents and Teachers Taking Action for Healthy Kids* guide was created and is available to school parent groups. These resources can be found at ERM's website or under the Montana chapter of [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org). The team works closely with partners such as Big Sky State Games to support adults and children in staying physically active through their *Shape Up Montana* and *Big Sky Fit Kids* programs.

In the fall of 2006, the statewide **Breastfeeding Subcommittee** (subcommittee of ERM) was formed to address protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding across Montana. It includes professional education, public education and community work for supporting nursing mothers upon their return to work.

ERM is completely supported by donations and sponsorship from members and agencies. If you would like to make a donation or get involved with the important work of ERM, please contact Katie Bark, chair, at 406-994-5641 or [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov)

ERM's website: <http://www.eatrightmontana.org/>



# EAT RIGHT MONTANA

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*