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Fit Kids = Happy Kids: We are all role models for children

For the past 12 years, Eat Right Montana (ERM) - a coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles - has published *Healthy Families* (www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm). During 2011, ERM will continue this tradition of practical tips and positive health information for Montana families.

"This year *Healthy Families* will focus on the very timely and important topics of childhood nutrition and physical activity," says Kim Pullman, RD (registered dietitian), of Helena and Chairperson of the Eat Right Montana Coalition. "While childhood obesity has been in the headlines, there are more pervasive problems that affect almost all Montana children, regardless of their BMI (body mass index). In our fast food, couch potato culture, very few young Americans get the nutrients or the physical activity they need to grow strong bodies and smart brains for happy, successful, and healthy futures."

The 2011 *Healthy Families* theme, **FIT KIDS=HAPPY KIDS**, will address the current epidemics of poor nutrition (too many calories, not enough nutrients) and inactivity in children. According to Pullman, the solutions are actually simple, inexpensive, and involve every adult in the Treasure State. "We are all role models for kids," she says. "While parents are children's first and most powerful role models, young people often copy the behaviors of other important adults, like grandparents, teachers, and coaches."

The **FIT KIDS=HAPPY KIDS** campaign will offer parents and other adults practical, easy-to-use tips on tasty nutrition and fun physical activity that fit our Montana lifestyles. This information can help anyone:

- **PLAN MORE EFFECTIVELY:** Healthy, active lifestyles often just need a little bit of advance planning. Eating smart and being active aren't complicated and they can easily fit into the most hectic of schedules. For example, planning a power breakfast at home can be as simple as setting the table the night before.
- **EAT TOGETHER OFTEN:** For kids, family meals mean nutrition, security, and success all rolled into a simple event. Family-style meals (at home, childcare, or church) are about more than the food on the table. They are about talking together, laughing together, and adults being positive role models for children.
- **PLAY TOGETHER OFTEN:** Like family-style meals, fun family activities are a time for children to copy adults doing things that are good for their bodies (and their brains). Having active fun together can be as simple as getting outside to build a snow fort or a family of snow people in the winter.
- **ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF GOOD HEALTH:** Healthy eating and active lifestyles for children are not about restrictive diets and grueling exercise routines. In order to be fit and happy, kids need plenty of delicious nutrition and fun activities with their parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, teachers, and coaches.

"As a mother, I always look for tips to make my life easier and my family happy," says Pullman. "As chair of Eat Right Montana, I know that this year's campaign will give all Montana families the everyday advice they need to enjoy the benefits of being fit, well-nourished, and ready to succeed."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm