

Children's Health

Helping Children With Disabilities Get "Fit For The Future"

(NAPSA)—A new program may help improve the lives of children with disabilities—and help them better manage their health.

Sixty-six percent of adults with disabilities are not very satisfied with their lives; 78 percent are unemployed; and they have increased health concerns, including greater susceptibility to additional health problems.

However, a new DVD may help improve the future outlook for children with disabilities. Called "Fit for the Future," it addresses two of the most important issues facing people with disabilities today: health and employment. The DVD was released by Shriners Hospitals for Children and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

"Fit for the Future" is meant to be a unique, innovative program that fills a void in available materials. The DVD includes three 20- to 30-minute, upbeat, kid-friendly exercise routines—stretching, strengthening and stamina—that can be done seated or standing. The exercise portion of the DVD features patients and therapists from the Tampa Shriners Hospital, as well as FBI personnel from Tampa, Fla., Washington, D.C., and Quantico, Va.

The program also includes informational sections on the Shriners fraternity, Shriners Hos-



A new program helps motivate children with disabilities to stay in shape and build a bright future.

pitals for Children and the FBI.

The DVD has a second, equally important message of potential future employment. Statistically, people with disabilities have the highest unemployment rate (around 70 percent). Learning that the FBI specifically wants to hire people with disabilities could be a tremendous source of encouragement for kids with disabilities.

While designed primarily for children with orthopaedic disabilities, "Fit for the Future" is an exercise program virtually everyone can use. The exercise routines featured are general and basic enough to offer a starting point for a fitness regimen.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of providing exercise opportunities for people with disabilities. "We believe that a program featuring children with disabilities, as well as the strong presence of an FBI Agent as both partner and role model, may help motivate children with disabilities to exercise," said Peter Armstrong, M.D., medical affairs director for Shriners Hospitals for Children.

Credit for the concept belongs to FBI Special Agent James Knights, who is also a Shriner. Knights, of Pittsburgh, Pa., wanted to create a way to help children with disabilities know that if they worked hard and stayed as strong and healthy as possible, their future could include a career in the FBI.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services to children with orthopaedic problems, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate at no charge, write to Shriners International Headquarters, 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607 or visit www.shrinershq.org. All services are provided at no charge to children under 18, regardless of financial need or relation to a Shriner.

If you know a child whom Shriners can help, call (800) 237-5055 in the United States or (800) 361-7256 in Canada.