

HEALTH UPDATE

YMCA Helps Families Bring Healthy Habits Home

(NAPSA)—Keeping kids physically active and healthy isn't exactly child's play. Efforts to keep kids fit are most successful when scheduled as a family affair, according to Chicago-based YMCA of the USA. Children are more likely to stay active and to make smart, health-related choices when parents lead by example.

"Families that make health, activity and exercise priorities in their daily life enjoy many benefits like strengthening family ties, developing similar interests, preventing chronic diseases and, most importantly, simply having fun as a family," said Mike Spezzano, national health and fitness specialty consultant for YMCA of the USA.

The YMCA offers six "get started" tips for embracing a healthier lifestyle at home:

1. Commit to 20-30 minutes of physical activity as a family each day. Walk the dog as a group before dinner; share an afternoon bike ride; play a game of tag; plan fun weekend outings like nature hikes or skating.

2. Prepare healthy meals at least five days a week. Select recipes that use lower fat, sodium, and refined sugar; choose natural and unprocessed ingredients when buying prepared meals; buy fruits and vegetables over unhealthy snacks.

3. Choose to eat meals together in the kitchen or dining room. Eating on the go or in front of the television leads to unhealthy eating habits.

4. Hold a weekly family meeting to set group goals about health and activity. For extra encouragement, display goals for everyone to see.

5. Stress and conflict are major culprits in undermining



MAKE HEALTH A FAMILY ACTIVITY—Commit to 20-30 minutes of physical activity as a family each day.

healthy goals. Reduce stress at home by agreeing to respect the property and feelings of fellow family members; accept responsibility for personal actions; and behave in a caring and thoughtful manner.

6. Celebrate success with simple rewards. Enjoy movie night or a YMCA family night; buy a new board game; create hand-made awards; reinforce achievements with positive verbal feedback.

Families seeking inspiration and information can find it at YMCA Healthy Kids® Day celebrated nationally April 8, 2006 and at 1,420 YMCAs nationwide (local dates may vary). The free event engages families in fun, physical activities and offers helpful information to encourage healthy lifestyle choices.

YMCA Healthy Kids Day is sponsored by Disney Channel, Tropicana, Kimberly-Clark Corporation and Kimberly-Clark's Huggies, Pull-Ups and Neat Sheet brands.

For more information about YMCA Healthy Kids Day events, please visit www.ymca.net.