Asian Pacific Islander American Childhood, Obesity Prevention Program Launched

Responding to recent research that shows American children of Asian Pacific Islander (API) descent living in California have a higher risk for childhood obesity than other ethnic groups, First 5 California last week launched a public education campaign in Los Angeles and surrounding counties.

The campaign, the first in the state to target API American families, is designed to address the growing problem of obesity and to educate parents and caregivers about preventative measures.

According to the Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness, Research and Training, API Americans have the fastest-growing rate of overweight children. Using 2001-2003 data collected by the California Health Interview Survey of nearly 20,000 children from all ethnicities and races throughout the state, researchers concluded that API American children ages 2-11 consume fewer fruits/vegetables, have the lowest rates of physical activity, and the highest consumption of fast foods.

"First 5 California recognizes that childhood obesity is an often-overlooked problem in the API American community," said Executive Director Kris Perry in a Los Angeles news conference last Thursday. "That's why we're asking for the news media's help in publicizing the potential risks now."

More than 30 representatives of news organizations targeting the API community had an opportunity to hear comments from Dr. Judy Chen of the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition. She provided details of the alarming trend and gave tips to parents on improving eating and health habits of their children.

For information about the health survey results, visit www.askchis.org.
March 30, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.: Foundations of Infant Feeding: Application to Breastfeeding Practice, Exploring the Suck/Swallow/Breathe Triad presented by the Breastfeeding Taskforce of Greater Los Angeles, Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, 12401 Washington Blvd., Whittier. Call Debbie Cowley at (213) 596-5776 or visit www.breastfeedla.org.

Mar. 30, 8:30 a.m.-noon: Developmental Milestones: Axis V as a Treatment Roadmap - Training at the California Endowment; introduces participants to the major social emotional milestones that occur between birth and 3 years of age. $25 registration and $15 continuing education fee. Visit www.uscucedd.org or call (213) 383-5992.

March 30-April 1, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.: Certified Infant Massage Instructor Training at The Heart Touch Project, 3400 Airport Ave. #42, Santa Monica 90405. Registration is $650. Contact Jennifer at (310) 391-2558 x5 or jennifer@hearttouch.org.

April 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.: South Los Angeles Children’s Health Fair, organized by Immunize LA Kids, the South LA Health Projects WIC Nutrition Program, and Los Angeles City Councilmember Jan Perry at the Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, 4269 S. Figueroa St., LA 90037. Call Irene Health at (323) 757-7244.

April 14 & 15, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: Peaceful Touch®, a Healthy Touch Curriculum for Children: Two-Day Workshop for teachers, health professionals, and parents at The Heart Touch Project, 3400 Airport Ave. #42, Santa Monica 90405. Registration is $200. Call (310) 391-2558 or visit www.peacefultouch.net.

May 19, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m.: 4th Annual Community Resource Fair, at Rowen Avenue Elementary School 600 S. Rowen Ave., Los Angeles 90023. Call Mari Flores (323) 261-7191.

First 5 LA and LA County 211 Infoline Drive Home Free Resources for Families

More than 128,000 families in ten of the most underserved zip codes in Los Angeles County will start receiving on their doorsteps this week a packet of information about free services offered by First 5 LA and Los Angeles County’s 211 Infoline.

Targeting Latino and African American families living in low-income neighborhoods with a large population of children 5 years and younger, the Spanish/English educational packets provide a list of free family resources, ranging from preschool to family literacy to health insurance.

The month-long campaign is designed to raise awareness of First 5 LA’s parent helpline (888) FIRST5-LA and increase enrollment into First 5 LA’s Healthy Kids insurance program.

A second phase of the public awareness campaign, planned for April, involves distribution of 300,000 information and wallet cards to students in K-12 schools within selected zip codes in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

For copies of the resource list, visit www.first5la.org. For information, contact Ruben Vidales at (213) 482-7502 or rvidales@first5la.org.

GRANTEE PROFILE

Peer Counselors Help 10,000 Women In South LA Successfully Breastfeed

Ana Castillo wanted to breastfeed her newborn daughter, but couldn't get the baby to latch on.

"I knew how beneficial breastfeeding could be, and I wanted to give my baby the best of everything," said Castillo, a stay-at-home mother from the City of Bell.

Castillo's frustration turned into joy when a breastfeeding peer counselor stopped by her hospital room at St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood. With the counselor's advice, Castillo was able to try different nursing positions that ultimately helped her to breastfeed successfully.

The hospital-based Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Support Project is an extension of South Los Angeles Health Projects and is funded by First 5 LA.

Peer counselors serving four hospitals in South LA help about 10,000 women annually to breastfeed successfully.
EVIE'S DESK

Time to Renew Commitment to Health During Nutrition Month

After a busy day at work or chasing a toddler around the house, parents can find the idea of preparing a home-cooked meal overwhelming. But even when you don't have time to prepare meals from scratch, you can still provide your family with a nutritious, tasty meal.

During National Nutrition Month in March, First 5 LA offers some quick and easy tips to create a life-long habit of healthy eating. Remember: They do what you do!

- **Make food look good**: We eat with our eyes first. Do fun things like topping off a bowl of cereal with a smiley face by using bananas for eyes and raisins for a mouth!

- **Get children involved**: Take them food shopping and engage them in preparing a healthy meal.

- **Make fruits and vegetables a part of every meal**: Ensure that your family gets five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day by adding lettuce and tomatoes to a sandwich or offering grapes or other fresh fruit at mealtime. Remember: a serving is the size of the eater's fist.

- **Watch what your kids drink**: Sugary beverages, like soda and juice drinks, contain high calories and can lead to tooth decay. Instead, serve water or 1 percent or non-fat milk.

- **Provide healthy snacks**: Offer nourishing snacks such as cut-up celery or carrot sticks, low-fat cheese, nuts, and fresh or dried fruit.

- **Increase physical activity**: Experts recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity, like walking or jumping rope on most days of the week.

"It's critical that women feel empowered to start nursing within the first hour after birth, to develop the maternal/child bond and begin the cycle that will allow regular lactation to sustain the baby," said Deborah Myers, project manager.

Follow-up telephone support is provided within three days of hospital discharge, and further problems or questions are referred to the project's breastfeeding helpline or to WIC breastfeeding peer counselors.

Pediatricians recommend that mothers breastfeed exclusively for six months (no supplementing with formula, water, or baby food), and continue to breastfeed after addition of solid foods for at least one year.

In addition to numerous benefits to the baby, breastfeeding has been shown to reduce a woman's risk of obesity and diabetes.

For information about the peer counseling program, call Myers at (323) 905-1235.

CHAMPION PROFILE

Alex Sosa Helps New Mothers Successfully Nurse Their Infants

Champion Profile features individuals who exemplify First 5 LA's tagline, "Champions for Our Children."

Alex Sosa is the project coordinator for the hospital-based Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Support Project at South Los Angeles Health Projects, a community health services division of Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

After 15 years in student services at several colleges, she transitioned in 2003 to the public health sector because of her desire to help other mothers develop a satisfying and successful breastfeeding experience.

Sosa earned a BA in public administration from Russell Sage College in New York and an MA in counseling from Mount St. Mary’s College in Los Angeles. She is a certified lactation educator.

Which book has most influenced your life? The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein.

What makes you happy? My two girls, Camila and Isabella.

Angry? When people stereotype and are unable to see the commonality in us all—we share the same dreams and goals.

Which historical figure do you most admire? Susan B. Anthony, who fought for women's rights at the start of the century.
What is your idea of a perfect world?
Where free health care and education is available for everyone.

What is the greatest challenge faced by children and families in LA County?
Poverty and access to quality health care and education.

Which living person do you most admire?
Queen Rania of Jordan, who is changing this world for women.