

Tackling childhood obesity, Kauai launches schools' franchise

Kauai has embarked at an initiative in schools that educates children, parents and teachers about the benefits of healthy eating. The franchise, called Kauai@School, offers children a healthy, balanced diet, which provides food rich in essential vitamins, minerals and key nutrients essential for healthy growth and development.



Studies show that there are a growing number of childhood obesity cases in South Africa and it has become a worldwide epidemic. This is caused by lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. There are immediate health effects amongst obese children and they are more likely to have risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), rates childhood obesity as one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. It states that being active and having a healthy balanced diet is important for a child's physical health and fitness and for their mental health and academic performance. If good eating habits are started from an early stage, then it establishes a pattern of healthy behaviour into adulthood. Children who eat healthy tend to sleep better and are better able to handle physical and emotional challenges.

John Berry, Kauai chief innovations officer says, "It made sense for us to take this direction into schools because these institutions play a particularly critical role in establishing a safe and supportive environment, with policies and practices that support healthy behaviours. Schools also provide opportunities for students to learn about and practise healthy eating and physical activity behaviours. We know that parents are concerned about the wellbeing of their children and we're proud to be able to offer this service, which assures them that their children's nutritional needs are fulfilled while at school."

Scaled back menus

One of the three rules to living a healthier lifestyle is eating a healthy balanced diet. The venture offers children a healthy, balanced diet that provides foods that are rich in essential vitamins, minerals and key nutrients that kids need for healthy growth and development. The menu includes balanced lunch options such as hot meals, wraps, smoothies and snacks in portions that have been scaled back to cater to the appetites of children, as well as their parents' pockets.

Reducing sugars and cutting out harmful preservatives and additives where possible is important, because research shows that the foods we eat also affect our moods, mental capacity as well as mental function (including mood disorders such as anxiety, insomnia and depression), particularly in adolescents. The WHO advised that the amount of sugar consumed daily should be halved, as it stepped up its battle against public health problems like obesity.

Sheena Crawford Kempster, director at Reddam says, "This approach has really worked well and benefited all parties involved, particularly the parents, teachers and mostly the children. The children have high levels of healthy sustainable energy in the class room, enabling them to concentrate and function to their full ability."

Since the concept was launched, results have been very positive, with benefits for the students, parents and teachers. Results showed that the children were calmer; they displayed improved focus and concentration, and started responding far better in class.

The franchise is open to all schools nationwide; for more information, go to www.kauai.co.za.

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