



NEWS

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Stone Soup's Food and Fitness Fun Club Has Children Reaching for Healthy Snacks In Place of Sugary Ones

(ENCINO – Aug. 10, 2006) Every parent in a grocery store knows what it's like to be nagged for the latest sweet treat advertised on TV. Parents of children in the Stone Soup Childcare Programs, however, are hearing a new refrain, "Mommy, can we get some edamame?"

According to the latest evaluation report on Stone Soup's Food and Fitness Fun Club, not only are children in the program choosing healthier snacks, water over sodas and getting more physically active, their new knowledge is changing what their families eat and do together.

"Children who learn young that eating healthy foods and being active can be fun are building a foundation for a better and healthier life as adults," said Judith G. Brandlin, Stone Soup President and Founder.

"It's a tragedy that one out of every three children and teens is overweight. This puts them at risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, bone and cartilage development – even sleep apnea."

A three-year, \$150,000 grant from The California Endowment has allowed Stone Soup to:

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- Expand its Food and Fitness Fun Educational Program to serve 2038 children at 49 sites.
- Recruit six students majoring in nutrition at California State University at Long Beach (CSULB) to serve as interns.
- Host 50 meetings for 470 parents and care givers to increase their knowledge about nutrition and fitness.
- Training employees how to use the Food and Fitness Fun Club, one of nine focused learning centers at each Stone Soup program. The grant has allowed Stone Soup to create a videotape of the training.
- Hiring a fitness coordinator, Estela Osuna. She visits one of Stone Soup's _____ sites every day and introduces small groups of children and staff to new exercises, games, stretching and walking as well as running contests and competitions with other Stone Soup programs.

The program evaluation done by Wendy Reiboldt, PhD, a CSULB professor of consumer affairs, will be distributed to educators so they can use the Stone Soup Food and Fitness Fun Club as a model for their own schools. Dr. Reiboldt's evaluations in fall 2005 and spring 2006, showed:

- 87 percent of the children who took tests before the program began and after it started increased their knowledge and awareness of healthy eating.
- Parents who participated in the evaluation process reported that about a third of the children drank more water and less soda; 26 percent ate more fruits; 22 percent ate more vegetables. After their children had been in the program, the parents reported their children ate chips 15 percent less often and candy 26 percent less often.
- 71 percent of parents reported in the spring that they had bought foods such as dried fruits, carrots with hummus, edamame, whole wheat bagels, soy butter, soy chips, soy nuts, pita crisps or red bell peppers, sugar snap peas or radishes for their children to eat as snacks.

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- 47 percent of the children tested showed greater knowledge and awareness of physical activity, including strength, endurance, and flexibility and stretching.
- 44 percent of the parents reported in the spring that their child (or children) were more active since participating in the program. These parents reported that their children engaged in physical activities such as soccer, bike riding, dog walking, martial arts or dance) an average of 31 hours a week – well above the 90 minute goal set initially when the program started.

In addition, parents noted that their own lives had changed as a result of what their children had been learning: 27 percent of the parents reported in the spring that they were more active since their child or children started the program.

One parent said, “I enjoyed the program very much. My children came home excited about the new snacks introduced and the physical activities they participated in. It has opened a new routine in our family to have more physical activities in our home. Thank you!”

Stone Soup Child Care Programs is a non-profit organization dedicated to assuring high quality, safe, dependable and affordable after-school care for more than 4,000 children in 82 schools located in low-income communities throughout Southern and Central California. With collaboration central to its core mission, the group uses its educational and administrative expertise to pool the resources of school districts, parents, governmental agencies, foundations, and businesses to provide a variety of enrichment and learning experiences for kids. Additional information about Stone Soup can be found at www.stonesoupchildcare.org

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