



Monte Vista pupils enjoy nutritional play day

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Learning about health education — nutritional and physical — took on the form of pure fun Tuesday for children at Monte Vista Elementary School.

They laughed, let out joyous shrieks and rooted for their team members, all the while running, jump-roping, learning nutritional facts, and performing push-ups and other exercises during a nutritional play day.

The event was sponsored by the Nutrition Network, a Tulare County Office of Education program, and Power Play.

“I love today,” said Steven Chapman, 10, running back from getting a drink at a water fountain. He was running to a station — one of 10 set up on the school’s playground — where the children would play a memory card game, with each card holding a nutritional fact on the back.

Next to his station, at the “Breakfast of Champions” relay, a rumble of shouts accompanied several children at a time running with a large spoon to a cup of strawberries, to pick up one, drop it off in a bowl of oatmeal at another cone and hand the spoon to the next runner.

Music blared in the background, coming from a game of musical chairs.

“We’re trying to have a nice day to promote health, promote nutritional health education and have a good time,” said Eyoseph Efseaff, an employee of Nutrition Network.

The program partners with the school in teaching health education to its students. It was the school’s first Nutritional Play Day, he said.

Some of the other activities included the Carrot Hop, Junk Food Snatchers, Veggie Tag, Apple Saucer Throw, Mingle Mingle, Get Rid of the Junk Food and a game wheel.

At the Apple Saucer Throw, children would simply throw apples from one bucket to another, and at the same time, learn the importance of eating apples.

“I ask them what vitamin is in an apple (it’s vitamin C) and what apples do for your body, and tell them it aids in digestion, because it has a lot of fiber,” said Starr Cloyd, an employee of the Central Valley Health Network who ran the Apple Saucer Throw station. “One kid said it correctly: ‘It helps you go to the bathroom,’” she said.

Each class, from kindergarten through sixth grade, had a chance to participate in the play day, Principal Carol Woodley said. The play sessions for each group lasted about an hour and divided into 10 minutes per station.

The children were able to earn tickets at each station, which they would cash in exchange for prizes.

Even the prizes — tennis balls, beach balls, cook books, jump ropes and jacks — had the overall health-promoting theme.

The children also learned fun facts at most of the stations.

“Pretty cool: I learned a lot of stuff. You’re supposed to eat five to nine servings [of fruits and vegetables] and junk food is bad for you,” said Victor Ortega, 6.

Delia Gaona, 11, added to Ortega’s comment: “And you have to exercise 60 minutes a day.” She offered her opinion of Nutritional Play Day: “It’s awesome.”

Bruce Meade, a fourth-grade teacher, escorted his class to the musical chairs station, a smile fixed on his face.

“I think it’s a positive influence on the kids to have this knowledge,” he said. “They can have it in their background for life.”

Some of the knowledge was more for general awareness, while some was factual information.

Obdulia Alvarado, a third-grade teacher, appeared to enjoy the factual information most.

She listened as Janet Hettinger, with the Nutrition Network, asked children during a break from the “Breakfast of Champions” relay: “How many seeds are on the outside of a strawberry?” The answer, she said, is 200.

“This is so cool and so educational,” Alvarado said. “It’s great: even the teachers are learning new information about the fruits and vegetables. They are having a lot of fun.”

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