

Arizona Cancer Center

Healthy Children Arizona



Health Educator Sabrina Plattner, M.Ed., is initiating the third annual health education and promotion program this academic school year. Mrs. Plattner offers this opportunity to kindergarten and first grade students and is available to visit schools during the academic school year to provide this education.

The program includes four health lessons - two for nutrition, one for physical activity, and one for sun safety awareness. The goal is to teach prevention behaviors for cancer risk reduction to children during early childhood.

During the 2005-06 academic year, Mrs. Plattner made presentations to 1,640 students in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD).

Mrs. Plattner is health educator for the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Department of Nutritional Sciences. She collaborates with Emily Nardi, M.P.H., R.D., a registered dietitian for the Arizona Cancer Center, and Sue Habkirk, Ph.D., program director for the TUSD Comprehensive Health Education Department.

In addition to in-classroom activities, Mrs. Plattner

works with parents and students to help enhance education for the entire family. A Family Fun Nutrition Night - an evening involving hands-on health education activities for the entire family - is offered as part of the program.

The Need for Change

Experts estimate that up to 60 percent of all cancer is preventable through healthy lifestyle choices such as avoidance of tobacco, weight control, healthy food selections, and high levels of physical activity.

As we gain in our understanding of the chronic diseases that affect this nation, it becomes increasingly evident that early childhood lifestyle choices, including food selections and activity levels, can have a lasting impact on health behaviors later in life and on lifetime risk for life-threatening diseases such as cancer.

With the loss of health education and promotion of physical activity in the schools, as well as a decline in family mealtime, children are no longer receiving sound advice about their health.

Continued on reverse

A 2002 survey of low-income Arizona children ages two through five indicates a 24 percent prevalence of overweight or overweight risk (Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System, 2002). National data from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program indicate the percentage of overweight children was more than 29 percent in 2003. Low activity levels and poor dietary choices contribute to obesity risk. In 2003, more than half of all Arizonans failed to meet daily activity goals, and less than 23 percent consumed the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruits.

Despite these low activity levels, our sunny Southwestern lifestyle has led to Arizonans suffering the second highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Early childhood is a critical time for substantial sun damage; sun safe behaviors need to be simultaneously encouraged with activity promotion.

Healthy lifestyle choices, along with complimentary environmental (i.e., family, school, community) changes, can substantially reduce chronic disease, including cancer.

For More Information, Contact:

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a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center

www.azcc.arizona.edu



Sun Safety Coyote Cowboy and Blanco the Duck star in the sun safety puppet show.



Children participate in the "Rainbow Activity," which teaches good diet and nutrition habits.



Health educator Sabrina Plattner (left) leads a group of elementary school students and their teacher in a physical fitness activity.