

Projects target kids' health

By Kasha Stoll

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In response to the national epidemic of childhood obesity, three local agencies have joined forces to raise awareness and education levels and to address the problems associated with being overweight as a young child.

The Junior League of Topeka announced Monday that for the next several years it will concentrate on a new program titled "Happy, Healthy Me."

"The Junior League is trying to bring the community together on this topic right now," said program chairwoman Cindy Shields. "We want to help educate, provide funding and provide volunteers."

To that end, the group has partnered with Family Services and Guidance Center and The Capper Foundation Easter Seals and is publicly endorsing and assisting programs those organizations have started.

"Get Moving!" is a free eight-week program sponsored by Family Services and Guidance Center. Boys and girls ages 6 to 12 meet once a week for 90 minutes to participate in noncompetitive exercises and learn about healthy eating habits, choices and self esteem.

Amy Burns, spokeswoman for FSGC, said the goal of the program is to "help parents and kids understand the need for exercise and healthy eating."

Exercise homework is assigned to the kids, and parents are asked to participate both at home and in class. Discussion to encourage self-esteem and positive reinforcement is provided by adult mentors.

Burns described the program as preventive and said many of the children involved are of normal weight.

The Capper Foundation's program, "On the Ball," is designed to help girls ages 9 through 12 who are struggling with weight issues.

Participants and at least one of their parents meet with a physical therapist and registered dietitian twice a week for 10 weeks. Class sessions include aerobic exercise using music, noncompetitive games and a 30-inch therapy ball. Each girl will be given the therapy ball to take home at the end of the program.

Nutritional counseling also is an important component of the program, and individual counseling is available.

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

"Get Moving!": Sponsored by Family Services and Guidance Center

Next class: Starts Monday

Participants: Boys and girls ages 6 to 12

Cost: Free

Phone: 232-5005

"On the Ball": Sponsored by The Capper Foundation

Next class: Starts April 4

Participants: Girls ages 9 to 12 who are struggling with weight issues

Cost: \$60

Questions: Call Debbie O'Neil at 272-4060 or visit www.capper.org

Kasha Stoll can be reached at (785) 295-1270 or kasha.stoll@cjonline.com.

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