



**Taking Action for Our Kids**  
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[www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org)

**Presley:** Mom, there's nothing on television.

**Coach:** How is that possible? We have 999 channels! When I was your age, we had 3 channels – and we were darn grateful to have those!

**Presley:** So what did you do?

**Coach:** We went out and played.

**Presley:** What, like, with your PSP?

**Coach:** PSP? Heck no! We played with our B.A.L.L. and our B.I.K.E.

**Presley:** Funny Mom. I could never have survived back then in the olden days. Sheesh! Three stations. Next you'll tell me you didn't have a cell phone. How did you hook up with your friends?

**Coach:** It was weird – I walked to their houses and knocked on their doors.

**Presley:** Yea, no IMing back then.

**Coach:** Sweetie, we didn't even have computers back then. We had typewriters.

**Presley:** (blank stare)

**Coach:** You know, typewriters – peck, peck, peck, ding?

**Presley:** Must have been boring back then.

**Coach:** Not at all, honey. We had great times and zillions of things to do. What we didn't have back then was an obesity epidemic and a generation of children who would die before their parents.....

And that's what we're looking at folks. I'm one of the lucky parents. My daughter Presley is extremely active with athletics and dance. She's also very conscientious of making healthy food choices. But childhood obesity is a growing epidemic in the United States, affecting three times as many children today as in the 1980's. A few other alarming statistics:

- Overweight and obese children often suffer from depression, anxiety disorders, and isolation and bullying from their peers.
- About one in five American children – one in four minority children – face serious yet preventable obesity-related health risks including diabetes and heart disease.

So our nation's call to action came about in 2004 with the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, which requires every school district participating in the National School Meals Program to implement a Local Wellness Policy. Each Wellness Policy has to include:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus during the school day.
- Guidelines for school meals that meet federal standards.
- A plan for measuring implementation.

### **What is Action for Healthy Kids?**

How can you as a parent or educator take action? We have the answer for you right here in Colorado with the Action for Healthy Kids national grassroots partnership created to address the epidemic of overweight, undernourished and sedentary youth – and focusing on changes at school. Action for Healthy Kids is a public-private partnership of more than 60 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition, which supports the efforts of its Teams (including all states and the District of Columbia) made up of over 9,000 volunteers. These volunteers include leaders in education, administration, health, physical activity/education, government, student leaders, concerned parents and

business leaders. Action for Healthy Kids was created in response to *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, which identified the school environment as one of five key sites of change. The 16th U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, is the founding chair of Action for Healthy Kids.

### **How It Works In Colorado**

Colorado Action for Healthy Kids Team focuses on three key strategies: adopt policies that ensure all foods and beverages available on school campuses and school events contribute toward eating patterns consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans; provide after-school programs that include physical activity, adequate co-curricular programs, and fully inclusive intra-mural programs and physical activity clubs; and ensure that healthy snacks and foods are provided in vending, school stores, a la carte and other venues within the school's control.

In 2007-2008 we will focus on two projects:

1. A Parent Engagement Project which includes a toolkit, training and a mini-grant opportunity for parent teams in Colorado. The project goal is for Colorado parents of school age children to become empowered and actively engaged as advocates for change and implementation of their District Wellness Policy specifically in the area of nutrition and physical activity/education.
2. The other project we are currently working on involves the implementation of ReCharge!, an after-school program, developed in conjunction with the National Football League, designed to help students in grades 3 to 6 learn about and practice good nutrition and physical activity habits through fun, team-based strategies. I took part in co-training educators to implement ReCharge! in the Denver Public School system, focusing on four valuable life skills: Energy In (good nutrition); Energy Out (physical activity); Teamwork; and Goal-Setting. There are 21 activities divided into 3 modules. One of my favorite activities is a game called "Search and Rescue," from Module 1, activity 9, which can be accessed from the Action for Healthy Kids website.

### **How to Join the Team**

I joined it – and would encourage you to do the same. To find out more about the Colorado Action for Healthy Kids team, become a member and access information that can help make changes towards healthier schools, visit the Colorado page at [www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org) or contact the State Team Liaison Julie Gabler at 303-451-7711.