

For Our Children

by Amy Sowinski

Over the past decade, a childhood obesity epidemic has developed in the United States. It has become a major problem that continues to grow larger each year because nothing is done about it. It prevents the children who are overweight and obese from growing up to lead normal, happy lives. It also contributes to the plague of rapidly increasing health care costs due to medical costs associated with obesity. These costs will only continue to rise as children who are obese become adults who are obese and face even more health problems. We must do something to stop the childhood obesity epidemic.



To stop obesity, we must start with the children. The government needs to get the schools involved by giving children, parents, and schools incentives to work on this problem. I have come up with a plan which would significantly reduce the number of children who are obese. The Government could start a program which they could call the “Nutritionally Fit” program. Schools would have to meet certain criteria to become a *Nutritionally Fit* school. If they met the requirements, they would then be recognized as a *Nutritionally Fit* school and given an award, as well as funding from the government. A large campaign could be started to try to get schools across the country to participate. School Districts would have to meet five requirements in order to be recognized and awarded the money.

- First, the school district would have to hold active physical education classes for all students every day during the school week. During the physical education classes, children would be encouraged to exercise at home and taught that exercise should be a normal part of their day.
- Second, the school district would need to hold nutritional classes for 20 minutes, twice a week, for all students to attend. Children would be taught about nutrition, about what and how much to eat, and about how eating the right foods can contribute to making them healthy.
- The third thing the school districts would need to do is to hold a nutritional class for parents to attend at least three times a year. Since parents are the ones who buy the food the children eat, it is necessary to educate them about what their children should be eating. The classes could explain to parents what types of foods their children should be eating, and easy ways to incorporate healthy meals into their day.
- The fourth requirement for the school districts would be that their school lunches would have to be healthy and meet guidelines for fat and calories. The school lunches would be an example to the kids of the types of foods they should be eating.
- The last requirement that the school districts would have to meet is that the school nurses would have to identify any overweight children, and then confidentially work with the child and his or her parents to become healthier and more nutritionally aware. The nurses could help the family set up a nutrition and exercise plan for the student.

If this *Nutritionally Fit* program were to happen, I believe it would make a significant difference in the number of children who are obese. This is an idea that could help reduce the childhood obesity epidemic that faces us. We cannot continue to ignore this problem.

Childhood obesity is a huge problem, and something needs to be done about it. Children need to be healthy, active, and happy. By starting programs in the schools, children will be taught about nutrition and exercise at a young age. By working with their families, they can change the way they eat and exercise at home. This will benefit everyone in the long run by reducing obesity rates, reducing health care costs, and making us a healthier people. We must combat this problem in order to ensure that our people can afford health insurance and, more important, that children grow up to lead healthy, happy lives.