

# Kickoff to School Health

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In the various MMPA meetings I have helped plan over the years, we've incorporated presentations from United Dairy Industry of Michigan (UDIM) on the many programs and activities they administer to help increase the demand for milk and milk products. Recently, I had the unique opportunity to be on the other side of the table—as a participant in a program sponsored by UDIM. I went to the event as a “Mom,” and it was such a great program, that I would like to share my experience.

Earlier this year, the Food and Nutrition Services Director at Fowlerville Community Schools applied for a grant through UDIM to take part in a School Health Summit at Ford Field in Detroit. The grant was accepted and a “team” of ten was formed to participate in the event. The team members consisted of four students, the school counselor, Jr. High Principal, a teacher, the physical education teacher, and the food and nutrition director. I was asked to be the parent member of the team and my son, Tyler, served as a student member of the team.

Fifty schools from throughout Michigan were selected to send a team to the School Health Summit. The program was a collaboration between the Detroit Lions, UDIM, Michigan Department of Education and Team Nutrition as a way to help schools launch

a wellness program intended to assist kids in making healthier food choices and encourage them to commit to 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

The kickoff to the summit began with each school team running through the tunnel at Ford Field as their school name was announced. What an exciting way for everyone to start their day. Students then participated in a “training camp” ran by Detroit Lions trainers. Student team members were put through various obstacle courses, quarterback challenges and more. This was quite a work-out for the students and got them charged up for the rest of the activities that were yet to come.

Following the training camp, team members listened to a comedy group perform skits and a rap song on the importance of eating breakfast, choosing foods from the Pyramid and the need for nutrient-rich foods in the daily diet. It was a humorous way to show the importance of starting the day with a good breakfast and three servings of dairy each day. The message of drinking milk and eating dairy products was a continuous theme incorporated into various messages throughout the day.

The morning program ended with a team building exercise led by UDIM staff members. Each team worked through a group decision exercise which helped



demonstrate the value of working together, hearing everyone's input and reaching a consensus.

During our "Half Time and Tailgate Lunch," participants had the opportunity to taste test healthy foods and rate each food item. There were new foods to taste—some good, some not so good—at least according to the students. This was also the time for everyone to sign a board pledging their support to eat healthy and be physically active for 60 minutes a day.

During the afternoon session, each team received a *Playbook for a Healthier School Environment* which included fun strategies to use in improving their school nutrition and physical activity environment. The teams collaborated to begin thinking about activities they will implement during the 2009-10 school year. It was quite the experience watching the interaction among the diverse team members all working toward the mission of improving the health and fitness of young students.

Following our team discussion, we then listened to Jean Blaydes Madigan, a national speaker who led an interactive session on the link between learning and movement. She demonstrated what a difference it makes to have a few minutes of physical activity—even from sitting in a chair—to energize the mind and body.

The final event to cap off the day was a "Press Conference" with two Detroit Lions players. Jason Hanson, kicker and Jeff Backus, defensive tackle, joined the group and provided tips on how to eat right and play hard for optimum performance. Hanson remarked how he, along with his teammates, drink milk because they "know it is good for them." The students then had the chance to ask questions of the players which included anything from asking what they eat for breakfast, how many points they scored, will they win again and asking what their favorite sport is (which brought some laughter).

As the summit ended, the work now begins as each team must meet the grant requirements as outlined in the *Playbook*. The team is charged with creating an Action Plan on how they will implement the various strategies including starting or increasing participation in a school breakfast program, adopting Michigan Nutrition Standards for at least one school building and creating a planning calendar with monthly healthy eating and/or nutrition education activities.

This event was a wonderful forum for students, parents and educators to interact. It's not everyday that students can spend the day with their school principal, teachers, and counselors providing input and suggestions in helping to create a healthy school environment. The enthusiasm created by this one day event is sure to carry over throughout the school year.

The Lions may not have the best record on the field, but on this particular day, they, along with UDIM, Team Nutrition and the Mich. Dept. of Education, scored big for Michigan school children. It was great to be a part of it.

*See "Fuel Up to Play 60," on page 22 of this issue to learn more about how the dairy industry and NFL are working together to encourage kids to lead healthy lifestyles and find out how to get schools in your area involved.*



**Top:** Participants were able to feel the excitement of running through the tunnel onto Ford Field.

**Middle:** The Fowlerville School's Team.

**Bottom:** Students pledged to eat healthy and be physically active for at least 60 minutes per day.

**Opposite page:** Everyone huddled up to celebrate their accomplishments.