

20 November, 2014

Kids' healthy lifestyle program celebrates important milestone

A free healthy lifestyle program for children is celebrating reaching an important milestone after helping 500 local families to improve their health and wellbeing.

Go4Fun supports 7-13 year olds and their families to adopt long-lasting and healthy lifestyle choices to become fitter, healthier and happier.

The program encourages children, who are above their ideal weight, to take responsibility for their own health and shows parents and/or carers how they can help their whole family make healthier choices.

Nine-year-old Valentin Estrella said he joined his local Go4Fun program in Maroubra because he wanted to have "lots of sporty fun" and he hasn't been disappointed.

Valentin said he enjoyed everything about the program from the nutrition sessions, where he learnt about healthy food choices, to the activities and games. He also enjoyed meeting other children and the program leaders.

He has made significant changes to his lifestyle since completing the course.

"I now eat more fruit and ride my bike more than I used to," he said.

Valentin's mum, Katerina, said she has seen positive changes in her son since he began the program.

"He is more motivated, positive, active and happier than before," she said.

Katerina said she has learned more about the importance of setting goals and has found discussions with other parents helpful, sharing ideas about child friendly nutrition.

"We have introduced more fun activities into our lives and incorporate more varied fruit and vegetables in our meals," she said.

As for Valentin, he can't wait to do more. He is now signing up for a local soccer competition and says he can't wait.

Linda Trotter, local Go4Fun Coordinator at the Health Promotion Service, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District said the Estrella family is just one of 500 families who have benefited locally from the program since it was established three years ago.

"The program is a really positive and enjoyable family experience and shows how exercise can be fun for children who may not enjoy traditional team sports," she said.

"It focuses on improving eating habits, fitness, teamwork and overall health. Many children who take part in the 10-week program achieve a healthier weight for their age and height, which results in them not only being fitter and healthier but also gives them a boost to their confidence and makes them feel like they've accomplished something really important."

The weekly sessions are held after school or on weekends during term time at locations across the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. They are delivered by specially trained health and fitness

specialists and include informative games, activities, tips on healthy food, how to read food labels and portion size.

They are designed to improve the child's self-esteem and confidence and build a foundation for long-term healthy living.

Local results of the program show:

- An increase in the number of days of physical activity from two to three;
- An extra four hours per week of physical activity;
- A reduction of four hours per week spent on sedentary activities like watching TV.

Registrations for the next school term are now open. To register or find out more about program locations, please visit www.go4fun.com.au or call local Go4Fun coordinator Linda Trotter on 9382 8641.

ENDS

For more information or interviews contact Alison Purdy on 9382 8226 or 0482 682 722.

Additional case study

Seven-year-old Alyssa Costa has learnt that not all foods are friendly since she joined her local Go4Fun program in Maroubra.

She now eats 'friendly' foods which are good for her health and does more exercise than she did before.

Alyssa said she loved the games she got to play during the program but the best part of all was swimming in the pool.

Since completing the program her dance teacher has commented on the positive changes she has made.

Alyssa's mum, Patricia, said she has seen her daughter grow in confidence since joining Go4Fun.

"I wanted to help Alyssa to eat more friendly goods and become more physically active. One of the biggest changes I have made to our eating habits is that I now serve the right amount of food and I've also learned more about refined and unrefined foods."