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NSW Health's free healthy lifestyle program – Go4Fun – changing local kids' lives

With Term 2 now underway, NSW Health is encouraging families to join Go4Fun, a free after school program offering weekly physical and nutritional educational activities to kids, who are above a healthy weight and their families.

Go4Fun is available free to eligible seven-13 year-olds and their families in NSW and since its inception in 2009 has delivered 578 programs to more than 6000 families, providing fun practical games and tips about healthy foods, label reading and portion sizes.

Linda Trotter, Health Promotion Officer, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, (SESLHD) said the prevalence of overweight and obesity among young people aged five to 17 years was still at concerning levels, with more than one in five (22.8%) being overweight or obese.

"The Go4Fun program has been highly successful in improving the long-term health of children by encouraging physical activity, as well as better nutrition choices, resulting in a reduced BMI and waist circumference," Ms Trotter said.

"The program gets results because targets the family unit, asking parents to also embrace diet and lifestyle changes, to support their child."

Sutherland Shire resident Evie Morris, aged 10, attended the program and said she enjoyed how the program combined fun and fitness, while also teaching her how to improve her food choices.

"I really loved it and it was great to do it with kids who were in the same situation as me. It was amazing to see how fast I got fit. I didn't exercise much before, now I swim 3 times a week," she said.

"I have a lunch box that keeps my food on track and I have replaced my three snacks a day with fruit and vegetables. It was hard in the beginning but now I am in a routine."

Evie's Mother Kimberly Morris said she has noticed a significant change in Evie since completing the program and said parents should encourage their children to enrol in Go4Fun.

"It's impacted every area of her life. She is much happier and has a lot more confidence," Mrs Morris said.

"If other parents have the opportunity to take their children along they should, it's a no brainer. It helps the whole family; I go to the gym four times a week now, which is something I definitely never did before!"

Ms Trotter said Evie's family is one of many who have made positive changes as a result of participating in the program.

“In one year, across New South Wales, participating children combined were drinking 288 less sweet drinks in total each day, 253 more serves of fruit each day, 729 more serves of vegetables each day and doing an additional 7,400 hours of physical activity each week,” Ms Trotter said.

On average, at the end of the 10 week program, participants achieve:

- A Body Mass Index (BMI) reduction of 0.4 BMI units
- A decrease in waist circumference of 1.7cm
- Higher Fruit and vegetable intake
- Increased physical activity by 3.7 hours per week
- Decreased sedentary behaviours such as watching TV by 4.0 hours per week
- Improvements in overall self-esteem.

Complementing the Go4Fun program is a suite of preventative health programs being run in schools and child care services under the NSW Healthy Children Initiative.

Register your interest now by contacting Go4Fun on 1800 780 900 or visit the website at www.go4fun.com.au

Local programs will be held at Bondi, Hurstville, Miranda and Maroubra starting school Term 3 2015.