

KINGS MOUNTAIN SCHOOLS

PE classes hope to curb child obesity

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

With childhood obesity believed to be on the rise nationwide, school officials are looking toward physical education classes as part of the solution.

At North Elementary, 35 to 50 kids participate in after school PE, running and volleyball clubs. PE teacher Kathy James started with a running club four years ago. Since then the after school activities have grown to four days a week.

James believes if kids are offered options beyond television, they'll eagerly participate.

"They like to play," she said.

At one point, James feared she was asking her running club members to run too long of a distance. When she tried to shorten the runs and add some field activities the students objected.

Some teachers are lacing up their sneakers and hitting the track with the students. James says this is a big hit with the kids and promotes wellness for instructors.

James says few of the school's students are overweight. She discourages dieting for the ones who have not lost baby fat. Instead, James recommends a healthy diet, more activity and eliminating soft drinks.

James wants her students to find some form of exercise they enjoy. This encourages good lifetime fitness habits.

"It doesn't matter what it is, it's so you can stay healthy," she said.

James hopes to incorporate X-Box into her PE classes. Students will move their feet along with the video screen. James believes this will especially interest kids who enjoy computer games.

She teaches her students why fitness is important. They also take their pulse to see if they are exercising at their target heart rates.

Cleveland County Schools officials are now studying system-wide physical education requirements though no policy has been set yet.

Locally, students at Bethware Elementary have three 30-minute sessions with a physical education instructor and two 20-minute recesses with their classroom teacher each week.

Kings Mountain Middle School students are assigned to a 41 minute physical education/health class each day.

Health and Physical Education I is a graduation requirement at Kings Mountain High School. Eight additional PE classes are offered including swimming and water safety, cross training and men's and women's weight lifting.

All Cleveland County Schools are working on school improvement plans. At Grover Elementary the planning team has discussed some fitness specific components including a goal of 150 minutes per week of PE, promotion of a healthy lifestyle by teaching muscle strengthening activities, instruction in building cardiovascular endurance and grade appropriate health and nutrition instruction. Another possible component is not taking away PE as punishment.

Grover, Bethware and North students all participate in the President's Physical Fitness test.

The North Carolina State Board of Education has adopted a Healthy Active Children policy which must be in place by the 2006-2007 academic year. The policy mandates each school district establish and maintain a local School Health Advisory Council to plan, implement and monitor the policy.

The state recommends elementary students participate in a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity each week and 225 minutes for middle schoolers. This should include a minimum of PE every other day throughout the school year. Classes should be the same size as regular classes. The policy does not mandate the amount of time but does say "appropriate amounts of recess and physical activity shall be provided for students." The policy also reads the "physical activity required by this section must involve physical exertion of at least a moderate level and for a duration sufficient to provide a significant health benefit to students."

The policy mandates that structured recess and other physical activity not be taken away as punishment.

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Students have healthier food choices

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

At area schools, requests for grilled chicken and chef salads are up. Milk and 100 percent fruit juice are popular.

"They are more health conscious. They ask for healthier stuff," said Jada Brown, child nutrition director.

The healthier requests come from males and females and while mostly older students, some elementary students are asking too. Brown credits their interests to television and classroom discussions of nutrition.

Under new nutrition guidelines, crackers and cake products were removed from elementary and intermediate schools. Those products were replaced with snacks like gold fish crackers, rice crispie treats and pretzels. Middle and high school students can choose between the traditionally offered snacks and the new items.

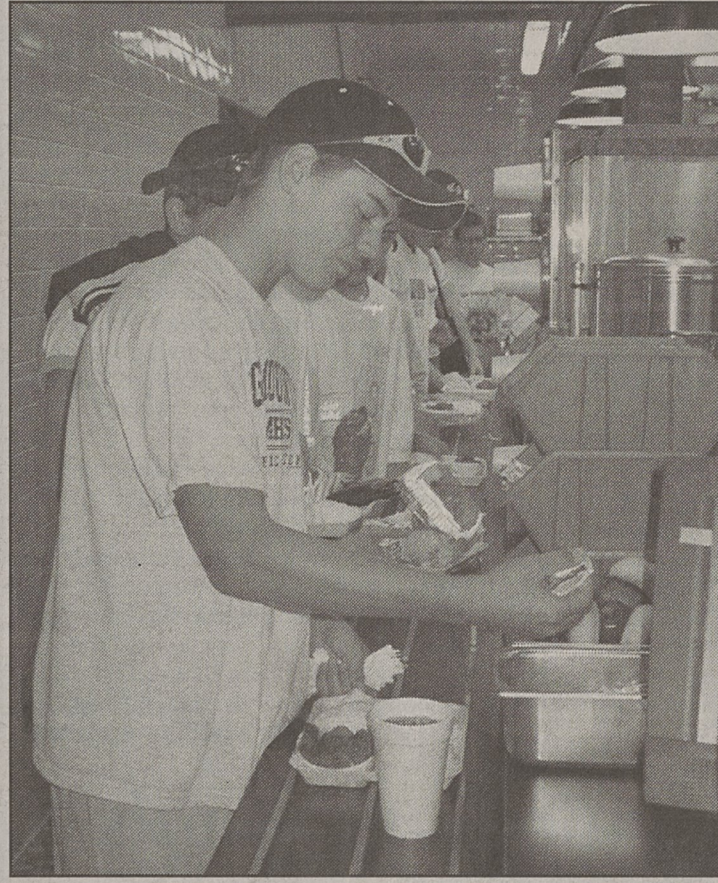
All schools have Winner's Circle options at lunch. These foods must be below 30 percent fat and below 10 percent saturated fat and below 10 percent sodium.

One percent and skim milk, available in plain or chocolate, has replaced whole milk. One hundred percent juices and flavored and unflavored waters also are available.

"The children have been excited," Brown said of the changes.

Locally, sweet and unsweetened tea is only served at the high school. Kings Mountain Middle School doesn't offer tea to students but other middle schools in the county do.

Salad dressings only come in the fat free variety. Cookies are smaller. Kings Mountain High School is the only school across the sys-



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
Michael Stiles picks up his lunch in the cafeteria at Kings Mountain High School. Across the Cleveland County Schools system, healthier options are on the menu.

tem to still have deep fat friers. These will be removed for the next school year.

While few students have asked Brown for vegetarian options, she expects this diet will increase in popularity. Students are not required to purchase an entree, instead they may buy individual fruit, a vegetable and bread. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich and fat free yogurt are offered also.

Students requesting vegetarian or vegan meals must complete a medical form.

Federal law keeps students from purchasing soda or candy until after lunch is served. Machines selling those products are operated by the individual schools, not the child nutrition department.

Kings Mountain High School Nurse Jacquie Burr

likes the healthier options but wants to see higher fat foods removed.

"I'm concerned they've not taken out bad options," she said.

Many students still eat pizza and fries daily, according to Burr. Sugary drinks also concern her. She points to some states that have completely banned machines dispensing these.

The rising rate of obesity among students worries Burr. Students who want help work with her and a registered dietician, however success stories are few.

"Someone has to really want that themselves," Burr said.

She points to one study which indicates four percent of all young people diagnosed with diabetes in 1990 had Type II or adult onset diabetes. Today, between 30 and 50 percent of youngsters diagnosed with the disease have Type II.

Type II diabetes is typically linked to eating too many simple carbohydrates and not enough exercise.

On the other end of the spectrum, Burr has only seen one case of anorexia, though she says that doesn't mean more students don't have the problem. Some may be getting care through a private physician.

When Brown visits classrooms, she lets students design a menu for one day's lunch at their school. Some of the most popular items are cheeseburgers, pizza, vegetable soup, oranges and watermelon.

A few Kings Mountain High School talked about school lunches with the Herald last week.

Robert Lowery would like to see more variety, especially from different cultures. Maria Herndon usually chooses from the plate line instead of a la carte. A vegetable lover, Herndon doesn't eat red meat for health reasons. Sometimes she'll skip lunch to avoid calories. Herndon wishes the cafeteria would serve V-8 juice.

Dustin Wilson describes himself as an anti-vegetarian. He finds vegetables bland preferring meat and fruit, especially pineapple.

Tuqura Hart often eats chicken nuggets and usually has a Gatorade. Stacey McSwain could not be called a picky eater.

"I like everything except squash," she said.

MEDITATION

From 4A

status; because of the way he dealt with his limitations. And Paul is not alone in this. There have been others. For example, the great scientist Pasteur had a paralytic stroke when he was just 46 years old, yet it is upon his titanic work that much of contemporary medicine rests. Or consider Beethoven, who wrote his music even though he was deaf. And then there was Milton, who composed his poetry even though he was blind.

For many people a hero is someone who possesses power, skill or influence, but for me a hero is someone who rises above profound weakness. I believe all of us can learn from such heroes, because they deal courageously with their limitations and, like Paul, they rest upon the grace of God. It may not make us heroes, but I'm convinced that resting upon the all-sufficient grace of God is the only way to make it in this life.

Rev. Jeff Hensley is the pastor of Kings Mountain Baptist Church.

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