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## "Fit Kids" program puts Yonkers students through their paces

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The Journal News*



YONKERS - Students at School 23 in Yonkers yesterday ran through hula hoops, bounced inflatable balls in a parachute net, and tossed around free Frisbees as part of a countywide health initiative called Be Fit Westchester.

Be Fit Westchester attempts to combat obesity by sponsoring nutritional programs and offering physical fitness opportunities. The effort has a branch called Fit Kids that focuses on encouraging healthy active lifestyles and good eating habits in children.

Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman, who attended the event said, "One of the biggest problems we face is obesity. A third of Westchester kids is overweight and obesity is not just something you can treat with a pill. Today there are so many opportunities for children not to be physically active."

With school almost over, the event was arranged to offer ideas for healthy low-cost activities that children can engage in during the summer. Displays showed the children the amount of sugar in popular soft drinks and the amount of salt within some fast food products.

"Wow, there's that much salt in a baked potato!" exclaimed one surprised child who was browsing through the exhibits.

County Executive Andrew Spano, who was also there, said, "You can see the value of it (the Fit Kids Program). There are many kids who are obese or overweight and this can lead to heart failure or other medical problems down the road. It is a problem we have to deal with."

"So far we have around 50 schools involved in the program and we are hoping to get more," he said.

In addition to hosting fitness events, Fit Kids also works with schools to introduce healthier food choices to the school's cafeteria and vending machines. Fit Kids also brings in outside agencies to work with children and promote good mental health.

Students like Yonkers fifth-grader Ryan Rogers appeared to be taking the message to heart.

"I usually play video games, but I'm going to try and go to the pool or the beach more this summer," he said.