

Market the facts

Overweight America: skating can be part of the solution!

By Kathy Bergstrom

The statistics on overweight children in America aren't pretty.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the percentage of overweight American children ages 6-11 doubled from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 2006. Obesity tripled among adolescents, or ages 12-19, during that same period going from 5 to 17.6 percent, according to the agency.

The Surgeon General's Office estimates that 12.5 million U.S. children are overweight. Additionally, the CDC said that 61 percent of young people have at least one added risk factor for heart disease such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

But, did you know kids can burn 350 calories in an hour and have fun with their friends by roller skating? It's a great way for kids to meet recommended guidelines for physical activity, said Melissa Johnson, executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

"It's an excellent activity for cardiovascular health. It's always great if people are trying to manage their weight," she said.

Current guidelines call for children to have 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and that time should include bone development and muscular development activities. The exercise should include exercise of vigorous intensity at least three days per week, and muscle and bone strengthening at least three days a week.

"Roller skating is definitely a phenomenal aerobic activity, because it's continuous," Johnson said, adding that the sport can be moderate or vigorous, and it's fun for both children and adults. The average person can burn about 350 calories in an hour by skating at a rate of six miles per hour and can increase it up to 600 calories if by averaging 10 miles per hour, she said.

"The main theme of physical activity guidelines is 'be active your way,'" Johnson said. The council wants people to choose activities that are fun and that they enjoy. Roller skating is easy to access because many communities have a rink.

The President's Council has already worked with the Roller Skating Association International (RSA) to promote roller skating as a good activity and plans to continue in the future.

The RSA was one of the advocates



Melissa Johnson, executive director, President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

for this year's President's Challenge, which was held from March 20 to May 15. The challenge asks participants to exercise 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

The Association held its first Skate A Million Miles Event to see how many people could skate at least five times during the time period and if those skaters could reach 1 million miles. About 65 to 100 rinks and about 5,000 skaters participated in the program, Johnson said. They

skated about 500,000 miles total.

Individual rinks participating in the program could present skaters who successfully completed the program with the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award. The Council plans to hold the fitness challenge again this year.

Participating in the President's Challenge is a great marketing opportunity for rinks because they are listed with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports as rinks that offer the award, said Johnson. They also can use the President's Challenge logo.

And if you want help promoting your fitness-related skating sessions, the RSA offers members a complete marketing packet that includes a fitness press release for rinks to send to their local media.

In addition to stats from the President's Council, the release also states facts from the American Heart Association and the University of Massachusetts, among other health-related organizations, on roller skating's benefits.

One such finding is that roller skating provides a complete aerobic workout and involves all 640+ of the body's muscles, especially the heart.

The Web site www.presidentschallenge.org contains a pull down menu of fitness activities to choose from and allows participants to track their activity online if they register.

"It's an inspirational kind of motivational way to track and monitor your own activity," said Johnson.

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