



FoodPlay group stresses nutrition, being active to elementary students

By Lindsay Vaughn
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PRINCETON — Physical education teacher Chris Anderson promotes healthy nutrition on a regular basis in her classes at Reagan Middle School in Tiskilwa, but the whole school got some extra exposure to these lessons Monday during FoodPlay, a national award-winning theater show that turns kids on to healthy eating and exercise habits.

During the performance, the children meet Johnny Junkfood. Johnny dreams of becoming a juggling star but keeps dropping the balls because his unhealthy eating habits — like skipping breakfast and drinking soda — don't give him the strength, focus and energy he needs to fulfill his goal. With help from the coach of the National Junior Juggling Team, Johnny learns how to juggle the foods he eats to create a balanced diet, which helps him achieve his goals and make the juggling team.

"Not all foods are created equal. Some foods are called 'go foods' and they'll build you up. Other foods are called 'whoa foods' and they'll slow you down,"

explained the coach, played by Tyson Savoretti.

Johnny and the children in the audience learned the importance of eating breakfast, being active every day, eating five or more fruits and vegetables a day, reducing sugars and unhealthy fats and reading nutritional labels to make smart choices about what they eat. The coach gave them tips on what to grab on their way out the door in the morning if they can't sit down for breakfast and how to choose healthier foods at fast-food restaurants.

One of the messages Anderson said she liked most about FoodPlay is comparing food to fuel. A car can't go without gas, she said, and our bodies can't go without food.

Anderson applied for the grant through Bureau County Ag in the Classroom. FoodPlay is sponsored by the Illinois Soybean Association.

In addition to the assembly, the school also received a resource kit to help teachers follow up on the show by incorporating healthy lifestyle lessons into their classes.

"We'll talk about it in P.E., but we basically do anyway," said Anderson.

After a program like



NewsTribune photo/Kemp Smith
Carlton "Johnny Junkfood" Hall talks to Peru Washington School students (from left) Jonathan Colby, Sarah Camp and Jessica Doyle as The Coach, Tyson Savoretti holds up a sign during a performance of FoodPlay at the school Tuesday afternoon. The FoodPlay group performs at schools around the country and present a program about good nutrition and healthy living.

Monday's, Anderson said she does notice students pay more attention to their decisions.

"It's making them aware of what choices they should make. They are making better choices," she said.

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The coach of the National Junior Juggling Team, played by Tyson Savoretti, and aspiring juggler Johnny Junkfood, played by Carlton Hall, inspire students at Reagan Middle School, Tiskilwa to make healthy food choices during their performance of "FoodPlay" on Monday. Johnny Junkfood dreams of becoming a juggling star, but he keeps dropping the balls until he learns to juggle the foods he eats to create a healthy, balanced diet.