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Teen Teaches Kids How to Be Healthy

Eighteen-year-old Katie Lohrman of Webster has been named a Healthy Hero by Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) for her work to improve the health of children in her community. She tackled the issue of childhood obesity by designing 30-minute lesson plans for children in an after-school program run by the YMCA at the Ivan Green Elementary School in Irondequoit. Her focus was increasing physical activity and improving nutrition of children after school and at home.

As part of her Gold Award for Girl Scouts, Lohrman completed more than 100 hours incorporating interactive games into educational lessons to help younger children make smart snack and meal choices and learn fun ways to stay active. According to Lohrman, “Learning, understanding, and implementing the recipe for a healthy lifestyle is a huge challenge. Once you know what to do, it is another major hurdle to break old eating and sedentary lifestyle habits.

“I worked with about 30-40 kids in each session. The session they loved the best was Drink up the Nutrients, in which the kids measured the number of teaspoons of sugar in a range of beverages, starting with zero in a glass of water and ending up with 11.5 teaspoons in a can of soda. The kids were shocked at how much sugar was in soda and were quick to vow to stop drinking it. The session ended with the kids drinking a healthy, nutrient-rich smoothie and happily displaying their milk mustaches!”

John Urban, president of GRHF, stated, “Lohrman’s strategy was not only to teach children healthy habits, but to have the kids bring those messages to their parents. Kids set a goal to do at least three Move Your Body activities at home each week and secure their parents’ signatures on an Exercise Passport. Every child that came back with a sufficient amount of signatures was given a pedometer as an incentive to keep up the hard work. We know that a one-time presentation does not change behavior. The strength of Lohrman’s strategy is that it involved reinforcing messages over many weeks.”
GRHF wants to recognize people who are helping kids stay healthy. These are individuals or groups that have gone above and beyond their normal duties to successfully impact children's nutrition and/or physical activity. Healthy Heroes are awarded $500 that is to be donated to the organization of their choice in the spirit of improving the health of children through increased physical activity and improved nutrition. People interested in nominating Healthy Heroes may visit www.beahealthyhero.org.

The mission of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation is to improve the health status of all residents of the Greater Rochester community, including people whose unique healthcare needs have not been met because of race, ethnicity or income. Three major areas of focus for the Foundation are prevention, health care delivery and neighborhood health improvement. Within the prevention realm, helping children maintain a healthy weight is a major focus of the Foundation.

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