

Here's to a *Healthy Future* for You ... and Your Kids

SURE, WE CARE about your health, but the health of our nation's kids is critically important, too. That's why, as part of our America's Healthiest 100 Days initiative, we're teaming up with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support First Lady Michelle Obama's efforts to make America's schools healthier places and fight childhood obesity.

So what's this got to do with you, the *Health* reader? Everything.

First, we want you to join us in the USDA/*Health* Magazine Healthier Schools Challenge. Sign up your local school for the HealthierUS School Challenge (www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html). This USDA program recognizes (and gives monetary rewards to) schools that do an exceptional job of creating a healthier atmosphere by improving the meals they serve and teaching kids about nutrition

and the importance of exercise.

But that's not all. As part of the USDA/*Health* Magazine Healthier Schools Challenge, in our October 2010 issue we'll honor the schools that have done the most to make the place our kids spend most of their waking lives as healthy as possible. Go to Health.com/healthierschools and let us know what your local schools are doing (more details below). And check out what U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack had to say about our partnership and the campaign to fight childhood obesity.

Health: Why is school nutrition such an important issue for all of us?

Vilsack: The health of our nation depends on the health of our kids. Children that aren't receiving proper nutrition don't learn as well as those that do. If kids are not able to perform to their fullest potential, they will not be fully prepared for a competitive world and global economy. Additionally, children who are obese have greater struggles with weight in later years.

And the medical costs of obesity are enormous—approximately 10 percent of our nation's health-care spending.

Health: Have you visited any of the schools involved in the HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSCC)?

Vilsack: I joined First Lady Michelle Obama at Hollin Meadows Elementary School in Virginia, and I also visited West Elementary School in Knoxville, Iowa. Schools across the country have embraced the healthy-eating, nutrition-education, and physical-activity components of the HUSCC program. These habits will last a lifetime and lay the foundation for the future of our great nation.

Health: Is there anything parents can do to improve nutrition in their local schools and at home?

Vilsack: With better information and simple assessments, [which the USDA recommends,] parents will know what is available in their child's cafeteria and can better assist their children in making the right nutritional choices. The next step is to complement proper school nutrition with activities outside the cafeteria. The Let's Move Web site (LetsMove.gov) has simple tools to help parents and kids be more active, eat better, and get healthy.

Health: How can *Health* and its readers help?

Vilsack: This recognition and celebration of schools that have succeeded in making a difference is a key step in encouraging more schools to join. With the help of *Health* and other allies we know we can make a difference and improve the health of our kids. ➡➡

HELP MAKE THE FUTURE HEALTHIER!

Sign up for the USDA/*Health* Magazine Healthier Schools Challenge!

Step 1. Go to www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html and follow the steps to register your school.

Step 2. Visit Health.com/healthierschools and share your story! In 250 words or less, tell us what your local schools are doing to help fight childhood obesity and teach our kids about keeping their bodies running strong with healthier eating habits and regular exercise.

Step 3. Look for a mention of some of the schools we think are doing an exceptional job in the October issue of *Health*. These schools will receive recognition, and you can steal their healthy-living tips to use in your own community. Making a difference is the best reward.

