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## **Help for Parents in the Battle Against Childhood Obesity** **Web sites for adults and youth, ideas for healthy alternatives to bake sales**

**SAN MATEO, Calif.** – Parents worried about the alarming rise in childhood obesity have a new ally – an interactive Web site that offers fresh recipes, news and tips on how to encourage children to eat better and exercise more.

The Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force created the Web site, [www.gethealthysmc.org](http://www.gethealthysmc.org), in response to the Blueprint for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action. The blueprint recommends that groups such as parents, teachers and after-school staff work together to improve access to healthy foods and safe, affordable places for children to play both inside and outside.

Recognizing the importance of engaging young people, the Task Force is also launching a site for youth: [www.yspacesmc.org](http://www.yspacesmc.org). Visitors can submit and view videos, discover fun food facts, participate in polls and learn useful information. The sites will be formally launched at a fun-filled community event at 3:15 p.m. Monday, September 8, at the Foster City Community Library, 1000 E. Hillsdale Blvd.

Childhood obesity is an epidemic across California and San Mateo County, where one in every four children is overweight. The launch of the Web sites is one of several special events in September designed to improve children's health.

The site for adults contains useful information for parents, healthcare professionals, educators, activity directors and others. The site also gives advice on ways to work with schools to provide healthy alternatives and enhance opportunities for physical activity. Visitors will find:

- Healthy recipes such as Avocado and Fruit Salad Topping, Black Bean Soup with Lime and Cumin, Bell Pepper Broccoli Medley, and heart-healthy Jamaican Jerk Chicken.
- Information on healthy eating and active living in Spanish, Tongan, Samoan and other languages.
- Funding opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity programs such as playground equipment and programs to encourage youth to be more active.
- The latest news and information about childhood obesity and ways to combat it.

“Everyone in our community can learn something valuable about nutrition and wellness at [gethealthysmc.org](http://gethealthysmc.org),” said San Mateo County Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson. “The web site will be a key resource to both children and parents in our community’s life or death struggle with obesity, inactivity, and chronic disease.”

The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health and the San Mateo County Health Department provided funds for the development of the Web sites, which are designed by Planeteria, Inc. Local youth

from EPA.net helped design [www.yspacesmc.org](http://www.yspacesmc.org). This site will also feature a story and photo of local youth who have advocated for better food options and more opportunities for physical activity.

“I’m really excited about the Web site for the teens because it’s very rare that there’s a Web site specifically geared for them and one that gives information on how they can get healthy,” said a participant in a focus group who used the site. “I’m also excited about finding ... information about activities I can do with my kids in the community.”

Jacobs Gibson will formally introduce the Web sites at the September 8 event from 3:15 to 5:30 p.m. at the Foster City Community Library, 1000 E. Hillsdale Blvd. Community members will have an opportunity to try out the sites and hear about the Task Force strategy for the upcoming year.

The Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force consists of members of the San Mateo County Health Department and representatives from schools, community groups, hospitals and others who are committed to improving public health. The Task Force formed in April 2005 and spent the first year designing the mission, goals, objectives and activities of the Task Force in the Blueprint for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity.

“Obesity has taken a toll on our children and it is a challenge we must address in a variety of creative ways,” said Jacobs Gibson, who played a key role in creating the Blueprint report.

The Blueprint found that about 4,900 San Mateo County children, or about 25 percent, are overweight. The rate is even higher for Pacific Islander, Hispanic, African American and Filipino children.

Many overweight children live in communities that lack ready access to fresh fruits and vegetables and opportunities for playing safely outdoors are limited. The Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force is working on numerous strategies to make it easier to eat healthy and be more physically active.

One method is to offer alternatives for schools and community groups to raise money than by sponsoring bake or candy sales. On September 13, teachers, parents, students and activity directors are invited to learn about healthy alternatives at *Healthy Green: Ideas for School Fundraising*.

The fair will be from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the San Mateo County Office of Education, 101 Twin Dolphin Drive, Redwood Shores. The free event will include presentations by vendors and the San Francisco Giants and exhibits, a raffle and other activities.

On September 12, teachers and parents can learn ways to collaborate with local school boards to improve the health of students. A free luncheon will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Room 20 of the San Mateo County Health Department, 225 W. 37<sup>th</sup> Ave., San Mateo.

Jean Schultz of the California School Board Association and Alisa Greene MacAvoy, a board member on the Redwood City Elementary School District, will share their experiences and lead a discussion. The event is sponsored by the Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force and Kaiser Permanente.

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For more information about the Web sites, contact Jennifer Gross at [info@gethealthysmc.org](mailto:info@gethealthysmc.org) or call (650) 573-2319. For more information about ideas for creative fundraising or the luncheon, contact Wale Adeniji at [wadeniji@co.sanmateo.ca.us](mailto:wadeniji@co.sanmateo.ca.us) or call (650) 573-2978.