WVDA

West Virginia Dietetic Association

eat right. an affiliate of the American Dietetic Association

John Gorski

2009 Essay Contest

St. Francis Central Catholic School
Monongalia County

Second Place

$500.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would educate them about eating healthy. I would also teach them about getting enough exercise and staying active. Knowledge is a great way to beat childhood obesity.

One cause of childhood obesity is eating too much unhealthy food. Many kids around the world have developed bad eating habits. Food items that are high in sugar taste good, but are very fattening. Sweets are okay in moderation, as long as the child gets enough exercise to balance the sugary foods.

A second cause of childhood obesity is not eating enough of the right foods. Kids who do not eat a healthy diet are more likely to eat too much fat. Kids need a balanced diet to lead a good, healthy life. This includes 6-11 servings of grains, 3-5 servings of vegetables, 2-4 servings of fruits, 2-3 servings of protein, 2-3 servings of dairy and sparse amounts of oils/fats.

Other causes of obesity are unhealthy life styles and genetics. If no exercise is involved, there is no way to burn all the fat and calories that have been eaten in one day. Kids that are never outside have no way to keep a healthy weight. Some kids are born with certain genes that contribute to their obesity. They need to work extra hard and eat very healthy to maintain a fit weight.

One way to stop childhood obesity is to eat healthy. Kids can ask their parents to buy plenty of fruits and vegetables for snacks. Eating fruits and vegetables are better for you than “junk” food. Balanced diets are necessary for living healthy. Fast-food restaurants are not healthy to eat at every day. Most of the foods are loaded with fat and most people do not realize what they are eating. This is one way to keep from being obese.

Another way to keep from being obese is to exercise daily. One hour of exercise a day is recommended by doctors. Instead of watching television and playing video games, you can go outside and play a game or ride your bike. Most obese kids do not get enough exercise. This is another way to be healthy.

A final way to keep from being obese is to eat breakfast. If you do not eat breakfast, you will be hungrier later and eat more. Breakfast helps you concentrate and keeps you from eating too much later in the day.

There are many ways to keep from being obese. Keeping a healthy lifestyle and being active are ways to keep in shape. Eating healthy food is better for you than eating candy and chips. No one has to give up the treats they like as long as they eat them in moderation.

Sources: http://www.causesofchildhoodobesity.net/
http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/dieting/weight_tips.html
http://www.lifeclinic.com/focus/nutrition/food-pyramid.asp
http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2008/08/20080825a.html

John Gorski

Elliott Herberger

2009 Essay Contest

West Fairmont Middle School
Marion County

Third Place

$200.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would tax junk food more than healthful food, rearrange stores so that the healthful foods are promoted more than junk food, and encourage everyday families to make sure that they are getting the healthful food they need.

Why do most people buy junk food rather than healthful food? It's cheaper and it tastes great! To live a healthy life costs more, and since everyone is addicted to the salt, sugar, and fat in junk food, our taste buds have become used to it, making healthful food not taste as good as junk food! I bring a packed lunch to school more often than I eat the school's lunch because my lunch is more healthful. Many boards of education can't afford to feed kids healthful food. If junk food was taxed more than healthful food, more people would buy the cheaper items and the expensive items would be more of a treat. I also believe that if a law was made that required necessities to be within 40 feet of the entrance of a store, kids would be healthier. If someone goes inside a store to buy the foods they need; milk, eggs, cheese, and meat for example, those foods are on the outermost reaches of the store! They are forced to walk along junk food of all sorts, and get caught up, buying more items than they intended. As they go to check out, they are

confronted by more junk food! If stores could be rearranged to put the foods we really need in the front, people will stop getting caught up in the junk food aisles, and obesity would not be as common.

Finally, I would encourage everyday families to make sure they are getting the healthful food they need. People need to understand what their bodies need. If you don't have time to eat breakfast in the morning and get food from the "Drive Thru" at McDonald\'s every day, the high calorie count of the food that you eat there will really add up! Simple things can be done to help you live a healthier life. If you have ice cream every night, try something else, like a banana or some yogurt. They taste just as good, plus they are better for you! If you are a parent thinking your child is eating too much junk food, try putting healthful food where your child usually goes looking for something to snack on. Also, at dinnertime always make sure there is fresh fruit on the table, either something your kids are used to, or a surprise fruit, to make it fun. If you are having movie night, have fat free popcorn instead of super butter flavor. Making small changes such as these will have a huge impact.

Food is an important part of our social lives. Everyone wants to have a fun time at a birthday party eating pizza, cake, and pop, however they don't have to also eat the chips, dip, corn curls, and ice cream as well. It is imperative that we all take better care of ourselves by watching the food we eat. Obesity can be avoided, provided by we take better care of ourselves with the food choices we make. Taking these steps will lower the obesity rate in West Virginia.

Elliott Herberger

Rebecca Turnbull

2009 Essay Contest

Bridgeport Middle School
Harrison County

First Place

$1000.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would help them become more educated about how to eat healthier. Then I would provide them with opportunities in school to make beneficial food choices. One way to make that happen would be to make school lunches better for them. To get kids in school to make more preferred lunch food choices, they would first need to know more about nutrition. I would like it if the school would offer a class about food and nutrition and require every student to take it. It would also be helpful to provide school pamphlets describing a lot of good food choice ideas. The pamphlets would tell the kids about how much fat and how many calories are in a lot of foods and would be available to them in the lunchroom. The pamphlets would also explain health problems that can come from eating foods with too much sugar or fat. I think many students do not know those types of things and might make better choices if they were taught about them. Also, there could be many posters around the lunch room walls with information about nutrition and reminders about good food selections. I would have the schools improve the lunch foods they offer by offering several hot and cold lunch choices, like fresh fruits, salads, soups and whole grain breads. That would

encourage kids to eat more of a commendable variety of foods. I would also have the schools only provide milk, water and juice to drink. Sodas and candies would be removed from snack machines and be replaced by healthier foods, like crackers, cheese sticks, granola bars, fruit bars, etc. Another place where unhealthy food can be present in the school is when teachers use them as rewards for students. So, I would ask teachers not to give kids lollipops or candies in school, but something more along the lines of pencils, stickers, and erasers for rewards. Lower prices on hot lunches would help children from less-fortunate families to be able to afford to pay hot lunch fees. In return, their kids can receive wholesome meals every day. With just these small adjustments in schools and the encouragement of parents and friends, almost a whole generation of kids would have healthier lifestyles! Wouldn't you want to be a healthier person for life? All of these things are what I would do if I could change how kids my age eat.

Rebecca Turnbull

Michelle Campbell

2009 Essay Contest

Oak Glen Middle School
Hancock County

Third Place

$200.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change the way kids my age eat, I would make good tasting healthy food more available, stress good eating habits, and tell them that its not about losing weight it's about getting healthy. Telling us kids about having a healthy diet is almost like talking to the wall. This isn't going to be easy, but I'll try. Try not to fall asleep.

First, I'll tell you how I would make healthy food more available. I would hit them where it hurts…..the wallet. If healthy food is cheaper than say McDonalds (I'm not putting it down, I love a good Big Mac too, and it's just what I thought of.) maybe, just maybe people would buy it. They aren't going to waste their money on healthy food that is 6 or $7 more than the other stuff.

Secondly, I would stress good eating habits. Kids won't eat healthily if they don't know what to do or how to do it. That's why we need to enforce healthy eating in schools, malls, restaurants, movie theaters basically all the places kids would be or where

the hang out. Kids don't know about cutting carbs or portion control, that's why we need other people to do it for us.

Finally, I would like to tell you that we need to let kids know that it's about getting healthy and not about being thin. We're under so much pressure these days. All of the models, actors, and singers seem to be as thin as a rod. That's not healthy because we will want to look like that and it could lead to eating disorders.

Now you know what I would do to change the way kids my age eat by making healthy food available, stressing good eating habits, and tell kids to get healthy. I hope you learned something.

Michelle Campbell

Emily Icard

2009 Essay Contest

Oak Glen Middle School
Hancock County

Second Place

$500.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change the way kids my age eat I would help change the menus for fast food restaurants, help make the school lunches healthier and talk to kids across America about healthier eating habits.

The first thing I would do is change the menus for fast food restaurants because they mostly sell greasy food with too much fat and too many calories. They also are not very filling and cause people to overeat. Fast food restaurants also sell fried and starchy foods that are NOT good for you. Instead, they should sell baked food instead of fried food and supply healthy foods like broccoli and other green vegetables. They should also supply water and juice instead of pop.

Another thing I would do is help make school lunches more nutritious. I would do that because the foods they serve at schools are not very healthy and make you drag the rest of the day. The foods they serve probably contain tons of calories and do not contain

the nutrients kids need. I would love to help schools across the country get healthier so kids my age don’t become obese.

The final thing I would do to make kids eat healthier is talk to them about their eating habits and teach them what they should eat. I would do this because many children do not know how to eat healthy. I would tell them to cut back on junk foods and soda and instead have a healthier snack like celery sticks and water. I would also tell them to cut back on the carbohydrates and sugar and to eat plenty of vegetables throughout the day.

Now that you have heard what I have had to say I hope you will change your eating habits and become a healthier person.

Emily Icard

Megan Simcox

2009 Essay Contest

Oak Glen Middle School
Hancock County

First Place

$1000.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change the way kids my age eat, I would create a larger variety of healthy foods in schools and smaller varieties of those that are unhealthy, I would also put healthier items in snack machines, and lastly encourage them to buy healthier foods.

The thing I would definitely change first would be to create a larger variety of healthy foods in school meals. For lunches, our schools may serve pizza with a choice of a salad and fruit, and if you don't want that, yogurt. A more healthy choice could be maybe a sandwich with salad and fruit. Also, adding a choice for vegetarians could help a school's vegan community stay healthy. Some nutritionists suggest that if some people stop eating school lunches they would lose weight, become more energetic, and healthy.

The next thing I would change would be to put healthier foods in snack machines. Schools have been getting better the past year with putting thing such as baked chips, one hundred calorie packs, and other reduced fat foods in snack machines but, there are still some products that are high in fat, sodium, and, sugar. Taking those fatty, sugary foods out of snack machines could make a small dent in the weight of kids that go to snack machines every day.

My last idea is to encourage kids to buy less of the sugary salty foods and more healthy foods, outside of school. Some of the reasons people don't buy healthier foods is because of how they think the name sounds or how they think it may taste. What those people don't know, is that those foods are good for you, and they don't taste disgusting. Things like pecans and granola don't taste horrible and most of all they aren't loaded with sugars, artificial sweeteners, sodium. One of the best things about purchasing these foods is that you will not be gaining weight from chips and candy.

So making those few changes can make children less over weight, healthier, and give them more energy. What changes will you make?

Megan Simcox

Natalie Strader

2009 Essay Contest

Oak Glen Middle School
Hancock County

Honorable Mention

$200.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would
If I could change how kids my age eat, I would do these three things. I would make the school lunches healthy but delicious, get healthier things for them to eat when they need a snack, and give them a fruity breakfast to eat in the mornings before school.

To start off I would make the school lunches healthy but delicious. I would put a Gatorade machine in the lunch room and in some of the hallways. I would give them a lot of things to choose from. I would but a salad bar in. some other foods I would give them to choose from is apples and caramel, a vegetables tray with different kinds of dips,

different kinds of chicken and rice, all different kinds of soups like chicken, wedding, tomato and, potato, and home made bread.

Second I would give them something healthy to eat when they need a snack. I would but snack machines in the schools. In the snack machines I would but fruits like apples, oranges, healthy snack bars, grapes, and bananas. I would allow the kids to eat before school started and in between classes.

Next I would give them a fruity breakfast before school. I would give them some drinks like apple juice, orange juice, or milk. I would all different kinds of smoothes, waffles like blueberry, plane, and pecans, eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, and pancakes like blueberry or plane. Or just some fruit.

As you can see making the school lunches healthy but delicious, get healthier things for kids to eat when they need a snack, and giving them a fruity breakfast to eat in the mornings before school are three of my ideas if I could change the way kids my age eat. If you could change how kids your age eat what would you do?

Natalie Strader

Megan McClanahan

2009 Essay Contest

Meadow Bridge High School
Fayette County

Second Place

$500.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY:

If I could change the way kids my age eat I would put healthier lunches in school. The lunches in school that are supposed to be healthy that we have now are rather nasty. You can have healthy food that is good. The lunches being nasty causes kids not to eat lunch. This causes the kids to go home and eat all kinds of junk food.

Second, to help the obese children I would put exercise programs in school. Most kids do not get the exercise that they need. You would be surprised at the difference it would make if everyone would just exercise at least thirty minutes a day.

Everyone should encourage kids to eat healthy all the time. Kids are never encouraged to eat healthy. Kids that are encouraged seem to be healthier.

I think that the healthier the parents are the more likely the kids are to be healthy. Parents that are obese do not seem to encourage their kids. The children look at their parents and they think it is ok to be obese.

They should have programs at school to help kids learn what their diet should be. Some kids just do not understand. If everyone tried to explain and understand things would not be as bad as they are.

Kids need to be more active at home. Most kids never do anything. If kids would just go outside that would be great for them. They could have a lot more fun outside than in.

Kids need to watch what they eat and do. If kids were more careful there would not be so many obese people. Kids need encouraged.

In conclusion, we need to watch ourselves. People need encouragement. Everyone needs to try really hard.

Megan McClanahan

Dillon Pomeroy

2009 Essay Contest

Meadow Bridge High School
Fayette County

First Place

$1000.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would make kids eat healthier and exercise more. One reason I think many kids in West Virginia are obese is because of fast food restaurants and lack of exercise. West Virginia should limit a person to go to a

fast food restaurant like McDonalds one time every month. Subway on the other hand is a healthy restaurant.

West Virginia's people need to start exercising. People need to exercise at least one hour a day fat or skinny unless they are physically disabled. West Virginia should put a monitor on all the people of West Virginia under the age of fifty. If people don't exercise for ten days they have to go to jail for ten days. If they keep no exercising they must go to a fat camp until they lose fifty plus pounds. People should eat salad everyday and start counting calories. Schools should serve better food to kids and gym should last an hour and thirty minutes. There should be a West Virginia exercise day every week. School lunch should include a Subway sandwich every week with milk, apples, and a salad. The government should only allow kids to watch television two hours a day so they will be motivated to exercise more.

People should only go to a unhealthy restaurant like McDonalds once every month. Applebees or Subway people should be allowed to go there if they order healthy stuff, no desserts.

Parents should make sure their kids eat healthy. Parents should also act as a role model to their kids. What do you think will happen if kids see their parents eating brownies, cookies, pizza, hotdogs, cake and other desserts? Most likely they will become obese. If kids parents become very obese their will become obese. Just like if a kid's parent smoke they most likely will smoke too.

Dillon Pomeroy

Austin Wickline

2009 Essay Contest

Meadow Bridge High School
Fayette County

Third Place

$200.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would stop all of the junk food from coming into school. Instead of greasy potato chips, what I would do is put something like baked potato chips in the vending machines. If you wanted to be a little more healthy you would probably want to eat school lunch. The reason is because school lunch is more affordable and more healthy than eating unhealthy foods from vending machines in your school because they give you pop, candy, and sugary snacks. The next thing that I would do is increase activities in school. I would make it a school that doesn't have junk food or anything that is fatting.

The next thing that I would do is reward students that go all month without any junk food on the school premises with you guessed it veggies and fruits. The next thing I would do is see if they could go all year and not have junk food then we would have a vegetable party and maybe some healthy prizes. The next thing that I would do is let selected kids based on a vote make up the lunch menu but make it out of healthy foods, except one day out of the month they could put in some different foods, but not too many unhealthy foods. The next thing that I would do is have a giant rally through out the school and that rally would be for encouragement to eat better and to eat more fruits and vegetables and greens. The next thing that I would do to make our school more healthy would be to stop all the food courts from selling lunches in our school. My reason for that is because there foods are very, very greasy and loaded with fats, carbohydrates, and calories. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have fats in our lives, but just a lot less.

Austin Wickline

Claire E. Allison

2009 Essay Contest

Winfield Middle School
Putnam County

Second Place

$500.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat I would be a hero! If I could change how kids my age eat I would make a limit to the amount of calories they absorb each day, make sure they get three healthy meals a day, and establish special eating programs for kids that are overweight, diabetic, or have other problems. Calories are a big part of the problem of kids being overweight and having health problems. Having three healthy meals a day is more important than you think. Everyone needs to help solve this problem of kids having eating problems and help those kids. Do you believe that this would help kids around the world?

Calories can easily destroy a kid\'s life if they don\'t keep it under control. Many foods that kids eat today contain a large number of calories. Some kids absorb the recommended amount of calories for a whole day in one meal. Too many calories can create health problems at am early age. Kids need to realize that eating healthy and getting exercise will help burn those calories. Kids need to be more careful about what they eat. If they could see all the things that are actually in what they eat, they would understand why they need to eat differently. Kids would get healthier if they realized this.

Three healthy meals a day gives you the energy you need. Many kids eat junk food all day instead of having breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Junk foods will not give you the right amount of energy and nutrition and makes you feel bad all day long. Some kids may have three meals a day, but they are usually unhealthy. In this case, three unhealthy meals will not do you any good. Changing one small thing like this could change a kid\'s whole lifestyle. If every kid would eat three healthy meals a day, it would change a lot. In this case, three is the lucky number!

Every problem has a solution. I have a solution for this problem. More than twenty percent of children in West Virginia are obese, and it is estimated that over 150000 people in West Virginia have diabetes. We need to establish special eating programs for overweight kids, diabetic kids, and other kids with eating disorders. Some kids should have a meal schedule or even someone to stay with them and help them with what they eat. We should have special foods available for them that will help them overcome their problems. We could even have special areas of grocery stores for kids with these problems. If everyone would pitch in and try to help, we would change many kids\' lives.

If I could change how kids my age eat I would make a limit to the amount of calories they absorb each day, make sure they get three healthy meals a day, and establish special eating programs for kids that are overweight, diabetic, or have other problems. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines health as sound physical or mental condition. If we work hard, we can bring people up from poor health to great health. If we can get kids and adults willing to help those kids to take these things into consideration, it would change the world.

Claire E. Allison

Kelsey Colvard

2009 Essay Contest

Winfield Middle School
Putnam County

First Place

$1000.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY:

If I could change how kids my age eat, I would teach them about healthy foods, show them how they can still eat the foods they like, and educate them about how to live a healthy life. Many kids just don\'t know what foods are healthy, and which are not. A lot of others just don't think that they can eat their favorite foods and be healthy at the same time. Others just don\'t know the facts about eating right. Kids my age don\'t know, or care about eating right, and that needs to change.

For starters, many kids think that healthy foods taste bland. They don\'t understand that food doesn't need to have tons of sugar to taste good. Foods, such as fruits, taste good, are good for you, and have natural sugars, vitamins, minerals, and fiber in them. A common misconception is that certain foods only taste good prepared one way. Many meats, like chicken and fish, taste good grilled, and are better for you than if they were fried. Another misconception is that eating healthy limits the variety of the foods one is allowed to eat. Many cultures have different nutritious dishes, so the variety in food is still just as wide. Helping kids understand this would help change the way many eat.

Also, many kids think that being healthy means that they can\'t eat the foods that they like. Most don\'t understand that there is nothing wrong with eating unhealthy foods in moderation, and with other healthier food. For example, if you eat a well balanced meal, a small desert afterward is perfectly fine. Following the suggested serving amount will fill you up just as well, and is better for you. Doing this is healthier, and helps with your self control. Use common sense! Don\'t eat fatty foods every day! Chances are, if something has five hundred calories in it, you shouldn't eat it every day. Showing kids how to eat better will help in all aspects of their life.

Lastly, obesity is associated with serious diseases, like heart disease and diabetes. The problem is many kids just don't know all the facts. If kids knew the affects of living a healthy life style, and the dangers of an unhealthy one, some might be motivated to change their own. Since parents control most of the food their kids eat, educating them would help their children\'s health. I would suggest something like a free school newsletter with a special section about eating right, and staying healthy. Also more programs, not websites, to educate kids on eating better, and the dangers of not doing so . Most kids don't visit educational websites when they get home from school, so in-school programs educating kids about eating better would be very helpful in changing the way they eat. These are just a few of many ways to educate kids about living a healthy life.

Statistics say that about seventeen present of kids ages two to nineteen are overweight. These numbers have increased greatly since 1980. The way kids eat need to be changed, and soon. Stressing eating right and living a healthy life style is crucial to teaching kids how to grow up and be healthy as adults. Using my ideas, paired with others would change the way many kids my age eat.

Kelsey Colvard

Shakthi Raman

2009 Essay Contest

Winfield Middle School
Putnam County

Third Place

$200.00 Series EE United States Savings Bond

ESSAY ENTRY: If I could change how kids my age eat, I would increase awareness about the dangers of unhealthy food habits, assist children with the said problems by causing solutions to become more accessible, and specifically cope with the issue of media and food. Most of the unsound eating habits are psychological and access related, and can be mended if addressed logically. Children nationwide do not understand the risks of eating disorders, so it is vital that the necessary information is relayed to them in order for them to cease these acts committed out of ignorance. Also, the media is negatively influencing the way in which children are making their food choices. Lastly, kids who have a history of hereditary diabetes or similar problems may need to be on their guard about their eating habits. Someone must be willing to guide them and who is more qualified than the school system?

All children are required by law to attend school, so it is the best place to begin a spread of healthiness. Children who are prone to munching unhealthy food can sign up for an eating program at school, served according to a menu approved by the guardians of the child. Most parents don't want their child nibbling on greasy french fries or fattening pizzas, but rather a balanced, healthy diet. As children spend one-third of their day at school, they'd be better off to have nutritious food as opposed to reheated junk. Healthy food is the foundation of a healthy body, mind, and in turn, a healthy society. When nutritious food is given in a common setting, the child remains influenced and inspired for the rest of their life. They would then resort to more appropriate food instead of unhealthy cuisine, thus altering the way in which they eat.

The percentage of overweight children in WV has risen to 48% compared to the national average of 32%. Obesity in children makes them miss more school, less educated and later be 1-6% less paid than their peers (Popular Science, March 2009). If more children discover articles in kid-friendly media relating to the perils of unhealthy eating habits, there is a less likely chance that they would attempt these dreaded disorders. They would understand the risks involved in their deadly decisions. By simple communication about the healthier choices to children my age, we can change the way in which they consume food and sugary drinks.

The media's been influencing how children consume food since World War II. They reach out to the children's sense of individuality and offer them 'Kid Cuisine', stating that "adult food" isn't for them. Children are made to view advertisements praising food harmful to their heath. If petitions are sent to major television networks, they might reduce the plague that is food commercials. The children, once their minds are cleansed of these injurious images, will modify their eating habits for the better.

Who needs heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, type 2- diabetes, asthma, sleep apnea and social discrimination while they could be dancing, swimming, playing soccer, tag, jumping rope or briskly running? A teenager is a person aged between thirteen to nineteen years of age, not a human commercial junkyard! Finally, none of this can be possible without the family joining in and eating healthy too. I sincerely desire that others will carry out these goals which I have listed. After all, we are

what we eat and I want us to be the best we possibly can be. Obesity should not be a city in West Virginia.

Skakthi Raman

WYDA
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