

# Let's get physical: Kids encouraged to get 60 minutes of exercise a day

In New Richmond, a new class "Let's Get Physical" kicked off Oct. 4 with about 11 kids in grades kindergarten through six. The free class, made possible in part through a grant from the St. Croix Valley Foundation, is being offered for four Tuesday evenings in October.

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By: **By Jeff Holmquist – 10/14/2011**, New Richmond News

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Jill Lindell, with New Richmond's Head Start program, leads the way toward Mary Park as students and parents take part in the kick-off for the new "Let's Get Physical" class on Oct. 4.

A county-wide health and wellness effort is targeting kids in several school districts, including New Richmond and Somerset.

In New Richmond, a new class "Let's Get Physical" kicked off Oct. 4 with about 17 kids in grades kindergarten through six. The free class, made possible in part through a grant from the St. Croix Valley Foundation, is being offered for four Tuesday evenings in October.

The first 90-minute class provided an introduction to the program and encouraged kids and their parents to walk to Mary Park. The youngsters were given a free pedometer prior to the walk, to help them keep track of their physical activity.

The kids were also given a daily log to keep track of the number of steps they take from now on.

The hope, said instructor Jill Lindell, is to encourage children to become more active each day.

"The goal is to increase awareness and increase physical activity," she said. "As the weeks go by, children can stop by any time. Even if they miss the first classes, they can take part in the rest."

The class gives students a chance to have fun while being active in a non-competitive environment, Lindell said. The goal isn't to promote hard-core exercise, but simply to get kids moving more.

The class instructors also provide information to kids and their parents about healthy snacks and healthy eating, to help cut the risk for obesity.

On the first night, Teresa Kvam, St. Croix County public health nutritionist, talked about the newly adopted U.S Department of Agriculture guidelines for nutrition.

"MyPlate" divides portion on a colorful plate. Half of an individual's plate should be filled fruits and vegetables.

"That's the key message we're giving out," Kvam said. "There should be lots of fruits and vegetables."

Slightly more than a quarter of the plate should be grains (cereals, breads, rice, pasta) and slightly less than a quarter of the plate should be protein (meat, nuts, eggs, beans and peas). Milk is the suggested beverage, but people should consume skim or 1 percent milk rather than higher fat content milk.

Kvam urged kids and parents to think about snack choices as well, suggesting that they think about carrots and dip or fruit instead of chips, candy or other unhealthy choices.

This week's Tuesday class featured outdoor chalk games. On Oct. 18, class participants will enjoy jump rope fun. On Oct. 25, the class finishes out with an open gym. The classes run from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Community Commons, 421 S. Green Ave.

There is no cost to attend. Registration is limited to 30 students.

Registration is on the school district's website at [www.newrichmond.k12.wi.us](http://www.newrichmond.k12.wi.us), Community Education. Call for more information at 715-243-7421.

According to Kvam, the "Let's Get Physical" class will be offered again in January and April, with different activities to entertain and educate the kids.

Somerset School District is slated to offer a "Let's Get Physical" type class in November. Hudson has also implemented a similar program.

"We're kind of sharing and learning from each other," Kvam said. "Our goal is to get the districts talking a lot more and cooperating."

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According to Kvam, the "Let's Get Physical" class is a collaboration between the New Richmond School District, Community Education and "Healthier Together – St. Croix County."

Healthier Together, facilitated by Hudson Hospital & Clinics and St. Croix County Public Health, is a county-wide initiative to address health and wellness concerns for residents of all ages, but one of the early priorities of the effort is young people.

The St. Croix County Public Health Department hopes to help school districts assess the student activity level built into their current curriculum. Several interns will be available to complete such an assessment, and then develop recommendations to increase the level of activity for students and thus improve overall student success across the county.

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Class participants received a sheet explaining the MyPlate concept of improved diet. Among the suggestions: 10 tips for building a healthy plate

1. Balance calories. Find out your ideal calorie level for your weight at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).
2. Enjoy your food, but eat less.
3. Avoid oversized portions.
4. Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
5. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
6. Switch to fat-free or 1 percent milk.
7. Make half your grains whole grains.
8. Eat less food with solid fats, added sugars and salt.
9. Compare sodium in foods by reading the label.
10. Drink water instead of sugary drinks