



Wild About Wellness Richmond County Schools

Richmond County students are known to be ferocious for football, but they are also “Wild About Wellness” as they take over the Richmond County High School stadium each May. Kindergarten students from all over the county come to the facility for a fun-filled day of healthful activities.

Decked out in school health spirit attire of “Wild about Wellness” t-shirts and colorful sun visors, students rotate in groups through 22 different stations around the stadium. They learn about everything from nutrition, gardening, dental hygiene, and hand washing to fitness and fire safety.

Students practice coordination and teamwork through activities such as line dancing, relays and parachute games. Football is not forgotten on this day as team players lead students in calisthenics and cheerleaders teach catchy chants about the importance of good nutrition.

Fluids and fuel are important for these growing kids so water, low-fat milk and

nutritious snacks, such as locally grown strawberries and watermelon, are provided throughout the day. Mid-day the Child Nutrition program delivers a healthy bagged lunch to all.

At the end of the day, students take home materials, such as fruit & veggie activity books, and the lessons they learned to share with their families.

The day is really a celebration of a year of school wellness activities. Teachers offer nutrition education through use of an integrated *Food for Thought* curriculum and physical activity through *Energizers* and *Take 10!* resources. Schools led walking programs for students and 2nd graders participated in a Swim Fit program.

Just as with any football game, the community turned out for the “Wild About Wellness” event. Participation has expanded beyond the main sponsors - FirstHealth of the Carolinas, Healthy Carolinians, the Richmond County Health Department, and Richmond

County Schools. “I just started calling people who we thought would participate,” said Brenda Mitchell, School Health Advisory Council Member and Operation Healthy Kids Coordinator.

All kinds of community partners answered the call. That support will be key in terms of sustainability. N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Healthy Carolinians and Richmond Community Foundation grants have helped to establish Operation Healthy Kids and the “Wild About Wellness” event.

Mitchell, also a key player, thought of the “Wild about Wellness” theme. She had the idea for a fun event combining wellness issues for students – nutrition, physical activity, health and safety. “We had three goals for the event,” said Mitchell. “We wanted to teach children to make healthy food and beverage choices, increase their physical activity and get parents and the community involved.” It is apparent that Mitchell and others have succeeded on all fronts.



Cooperative Extension Master Gardener taught students how to grow fruits and vegetables



Richmond Community College (RCC) Child Development led students in coordination games with hula hoops

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