

***Improving Health in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties***

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**Local Kids Get a Heart-Healthy Start**

South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD) director Michele Bever says that their new Healthy Kids initiative is helping kids get a heart-healthy start in life.

February is national heart health month and, to promote heart health, local health officials are encouraging residents to eat right and move more, our kids included.

“We know that physical inactivity and poor diet in childhood leads to poorer health outcomes in adulthood, including heart disease and other chronic conditions,” Bever said.

“It makes sense to start early with our kids,” said Brooke Wolfe, SHDHD’s Healthy Kids project coordinator. “Our schools, daycares, preschools and youth gathering centers can play a critical role in giving kids a healthy start.”

SHDHD’s Healthy Kids program is focusing on local organizations that care for and educate children and youth and helping these partners to make changes at their facilities so that there are more opportunities for kids to eat right and move more.

“We are helping these organizations choose among best practices, meaning those that are proven to promote healthy habits, and then providing a little funding to help get the programs in place for the kids and families they serve,” Wolfe said.

According to Wolfe, some of the best practices being put in place by the partners include: adopting policies that set the amount of physical activity kids will get each day, adding programs like a cooking club or providing more healthy food options, and improving outdoor settings so children can spend more time outside.

Participants in the project are, in Adams County: Pooh Corner Daycare, Virginia Tjarks Daycare, Sherrie’s (Eckhardt) Daycare, Kim Binkerd Daycare, Hastings Family YMCA, YWCA of Adams County, and Kenesaw Public Schools; in Clay County: Sutton Public Schools; in Webster County: The Valley Child Developmental Center and Red Cloud Public Schools; and, in Nuckolls County: Teresa Dressman Daycare.

Grant funds to support the project are coming to SHDHD from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Maternal and Child Health program.

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