

If You Are Fit, You Win!

Martignani, C.¹

The organizing committee and the participants

The prevention of children's obesity project is promoted by Modena Municipality (District 1) and the Councillorship of Welfare Policy, and is realized within the Childhood and Adolescence Health Program, a program that belongs to the Health Plan of Modena Municipality, in collaboration with the Councillorship of Children's Welfare Policy and Modena Public Health Corporation, and with the contribution of Consorzio Mercato Coperto Albinelli, Cir Food, UISP - Comitato provinciale di Modena.

The graphic planning and the communication of this campaign have been coordinated and realized by Consorzio Concerto.

Objective: to prevent and decrease children's obesity in Modena.

Target: girls and boys from the elementary schools of the Modena 6° Teaching District and their families.

Summary of the project

The prevention of children's obesity project consists of four phases:

1) The communication campaign "Chi l'ha sana, la vince!" (If you are fit, you win!)

Period: February– June 2008

The participants of the 2° edition are the primary schools from the Modena 6° Teaching Institution (Ceccherelli, De Amicis, Pascoli, Cittadella schools).

VITAMAN is the hero of our campaign and the leading character in the comic book that was given (in folder size) last year to the students. In VITAMAN's comic book there were suggestions about healthy food habits and instructions for realizing a graphic project. At the end of the school year, the best students' projects were given a prize.

During the first edition (in 2007), the actor playing VITAMAN visited the four schools and gave the students the informational folders and the questionnaires to fill out. In order to learn about the families' habits in feeding and matters of physical activity in Modena, the students and their families had to fill out the questionnaires and hand them back to the schools.

During the second edition of the 2008 campaign, the hero VITAMAN has come back to the schools, also with the students' families' participation, in order to playfully give back the results of the research. These results, also synthesized in the folder that was handed out this year, are the following: While a substantial part of the population practices a healthy lifestyle, there is still a significant percentage of families and children who should be made aware of some important subjects and messages: more physical activity (to play outdoor games every day, to go to school on foot or by bicycle), less TV in free time and during meals, fewer sweet snacks, and more fruit and vegetables. For every child, especially for the foreign children, more movement, less TV, and more opportunities for socialization and outdoor games.

In accord with these results, specific interventions have been planned, in collaboration with many partners, in order to foster greater fruit and vegetables consumption and to stimulate the "not organized" daily physical activity: for instance, going to school on foot or by bicycle, playing outdoor games more frequently, and being less sedentary.

In collaboration with the teachers, during the school year the classes have been asked to work at home and at school on healthy nutrition and physical activity subjects by means of a game, utilizing the folder that has been given to the pupils. Those children who follow VITAMAN's suggestions about a healthy lifestyle will win one point every day. At the end of the school year, the winners, namely, those who have been placed first, will be nominated.

2) Snack time with fruit at school

Period: March–May 2008

Cir Food, a catering company for the schools, hands out a fresh and in-season fruit and/or yogurt snack to the Old Town Centre schools on a fixed day of the week for every school.

¹ Ufficio Salute e Sicurezza-Gabinetto del Sindaco Comune di Modena

The families actively take part in the project, choosing, in collaboration with the teachers, another day of the week during which they give the children a fruit snack to eat at school.

3) Classes visit the Albinelli covered market

Period: April–May 2008

The classes visit the Albinelli covered market, like the previous year, and, on this occasion, the tradespeople offer a fruit snack to the visiting classes. The classes are accompanied on their visit to the market and learn about in-season fruit and vegetables.

4) It's time to move up!

Period: May and September/October 2008

Walking tours to discover the places of the neighborhood where the children can play outdoor games and do physical activity, in collaboration with the Modena sport association UISP. The classes will participate in tours to discover the places of the neighborhood where they can play. Team games, socialization, and physical activities will be organized.

Closing of the campaign with a final feast— May 24, 2008

In concurrence with the end-of-the-school party, the final feast of the campaign will be organized with the participation of all the classes, the teachers, and the families, with VITAMAN's entertainment and games organized by Modena UISP.