

## First Lady Michelle Obama launches Let's Move campaign to fight childhood obesity

Written by

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THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON - First Lady Michelle Obama today announced an ambitious national goal of solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation so that children born today will reach adulthood at a healthy weight and unveiled a nationwide campaign - Let's Move - to help achieve it.

The Let's Move campaign will combat the epidemic of childhood obesity through a comprehensive approach that builds on effective strategies, and mobilizes public and private sector resources. Let's Move will engage every sector impacting the health of children to achieve the national goal, and will provide schools, families and communities simple tools to help kids be more active, eat better, and get healthy.

To support Let's Move and facilitate and coordinate partnerships with States, communities, and the non-profit and for-profit private sectors, the nation's leading children's health foundations have come together to create a new independent foundation - the Partnership for a Healthier America - which will accelerate existing efforts addressing childhood obesity and facilitate new commitments towards the national goal of solving childhood obesity within a generation.

Almost a year ago, Mrs. Obama began a national conversation about the health of America's children when she broke ground on the White House Kitchen Garden with students from Bancroft Elementary School in Washington, DC.

Through the garden, she began a discussion with kids about proper nutrition and the role food plays in living a healthy life. That discussion grew into the Let's Move campaign announced today.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. One third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives; many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. A recent study put the health care costs of obesity-related diseases at \$147 billion per year. This epidemic also impacts the nation's security, as obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service.

"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake," said Mrs. Obama. "This isn't the kind of problem that can be solved overnight, but with everyone working together, it can be solved. So, let's move."

The First Lady launched the Let's Move campaign at the White House where she was joined by members of the President's cabinet, including Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, HHS Secretary Sebelius, Education Secretary Duncan, HUD Secretary Donovan, Labor Secretary Solis, and Interior Secretary Salazar, Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, Members of Congress, mayors from across the nation and leaders from the media, medical, sports, entertainment, and business communities who impact the health of children and want to be part of the solution. Program participants included: Tiki Barber, NBC correspondent and former NFL football player; Dr. Judith Palfrey, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Will Allen, Founder and CEO of Growing Power; Mayor Curtatone of Somerville, Massachusetts; Mayor Chip Johnson

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of Hernando, Mississippi; and local students, including a student from DC's Bancroft elementary school, and members of the 2009 National Championship Pee-Wee football team, the Watkins Hornets.

Let's Move is comprehensive, collaborative, and community-oriented and will include strategies to address the various factors that lead to childhood obesity. It will foster collaboration among the leaders in government, medicine and science, business, education, athletics, community organizations and more. And it will take into account how life is really lived in communities across the country - encouraging, supporting and pursuing solutions that are tailored to children and families facing a wide range of challenges and life circumstances.

President Barack Obama kicked off the launch by signing a Presidential Memorandum creating the first ever Task Force on Childhood Obesity which will include the DPC, Office of the First Lady, Interior, USDA, HHS, Education, NEC and other agencies. Within 90 days, the Task Force will conduct a review of every single program and policy relating to child nutrition and physical activity and develop a national action plan that maximizes federal resources and sets concrete benchmarks toward the First Lady's national goal.

While the review is underway, Administration and public and private efforts are already moving to combat obesity and reach the First Lady's national goal:

### **Helping Parents Make Healthy Family Choices**

Parents play a key role in making healthy choices for their children and teaching their children to make healthy choices for themselves. But in today's busy world, this isn't always easy. So Let's Move will offer parents the tools, support and information they need to make healthier choices for their families. The Administration, along with partners in the private sector and medical community, will:

**Empower Consumers:** By the end of this year, the Food and Drug Administration will begin working with retailers and manufacturers to adopt new nutritionally sound and consumer friendly front-of-package labeling.

This will put us on a path towards 65 million parents in America having easy access to the information needed to make healthy choices for their children.

Already, the private sector is responding. Today, the American Beverage Association announced that its member companies will voluntarily put a clear, uniform, front-of-pack calorie label on all of their cans, bottles, vending and fountain machines within two years. The label will reflect total calories per container in containers up to 20oz. in size. For containers greater than 20 oz., the label will reflect a 12 oz. serving size. While more work remains to be done, this marks an important first step in ensuring parents have the information they need to make healthier choices

**Provide Parents with a Rx for Healthier Living:** The American Academy of Pediatrics, in

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collaboration with the broader medical community, will educate doctors and nurses across the country about obesity, ensure they regularly monitor children's BMI, provide counseling for healthy eating early on, and, for the first time ever, will even write a prescription for parents laying out the simple things they can do to increase healthy eating and active play.

**Major New Public Information Campaign:** Major media companies - including the Walt Disney Company, NBC, Universal and Viacom - have committed to join the First Lady's effort and increase public awareness of the need to combat obesity through public service announcements (PSAs), special programming, and marketing. The Ad Council, Warner Brothers and Scholastic Media have also partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to run PSAs featuring top professional athletes, Scholastic Media's Maya & Miguel, and Warner Brothers' legendary Looney Tunes characters.

**Next Generation Food Pyramid:** To help people make healthier food and physical activity choices, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will revamp the famous food pyramid.

MyPyramid.gov is one of the most popular websites in the federal government, and a 2.0 version of the Web site will offer consumers a host of tools to help them put the Dietary Guidelines into practice.

**Empower Change:** USDA has created the first-ever interactive database - the Food Environment Atlas - that maps healthy food environments at the local level across the country. It will help people identify the existence of food deserts, high incidences of diabetes, and other conditions in their communities. This information can be used by parents, educators, government and businesses to create change across the country.

**LetsMove.gov:** To help children parents, teachers, doctors, coaches, the non-profit and business communities and others understand the epidemic of childhood obesity and take steps to combat it, the Administration has launched a new "one-stop" shopping website -- LetsMove.gov -- to provide helpful tips, step-by-step strategies for parents, and regular updates on how the federal government is working with partners to reach the national goal.

### **Serving Healthier Food in Schools**

Many children consume as many as half of their daily calories at school. As families work to ensure that kids eat right and have active play at home, we also need to ensure our kids have access to healthy meals in their schools.

With more than 31 million children participating in the National School Lunch Program and more than 11 million participating in the National School Breakfast Program, good nutrition at school is more important than ever.

Together with the private sector and the non-profit community, we will take the following steps to get healthier food in our nation's schools:

**Reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act:** The Administration is requesting an historic investment of an additional \$10 billion over ten years starting in 2011 to improve the quality of the National

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School Lunch and Breakfast program, increase the number of kids participating, and ensure schools have the resources they need to make program changes, including training for school food service workers, upgraded kitchen equipment, and additional funding for meal reimbursements. With this investment, additional fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products will be served in our school cafeterias and an additional one million students will be served in the next five years.

Double the number of schools participating in the Healthier US School Challenge: The Healthier US School Challenge establishes rigorous standards for schools' food quality, participation in meal programs, physical activity, and nutrition education - the key components that make for healthy and active kids - and provides recognition for schools that meet these standards. Over the next school year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working with partners in schools and the private sector, will double the number of schools that meet the Healthier US School Challenge and add 1,000 schools per year for two years after that.

We are bringing to the table key stakeholder groups that have committed to work together to improve the nutritional quality of school meals across the country.

New Commitments from Major School Food Suppliers: School food suppliers are taking important first steps to help meet the Healthier US School Challenge goal. Major school food suppliers including Sodexo, Chartwells School Dining Services, and Aramark have voluntarily committed to meet the Institute of Medicine's recommendations within five years to decrease the amount of sugar, fat and salt in school meals; increase whole grains; and double the amount of produce they serve within 10 years. By the end of the 2010-2011 school year, they have committed to quadruple the number of the schools they serve that meet the Healthier US School Challenge.

School Nutrition Association: The School Nutrition Association (SNA), which represents food service workers in more than 75% of the nation's schools, has joined the Let's Move campaign. Working with other education partners, SNA has committed to increasing education and awareness of the dangers of obesity among their members and the students they serve, and ensuring that the nutrition programs in 10,000 schools meet the Healthier US School Challenge standards over the next five years.

School Leadership: Working with school food service providers and SNA, the National School Board Association, the Council of Great City Schools and the American Association of School Administrators Council have all embraced, and committed to meeting, the national Let's Move goal. The Council of Great City Schools has also set a goal of having every urban school meet the Healthier US Schools gold standard within five years. The American Association of School Administrators has committed to ensuring that an additional 2,000 schools meet the challenge over the next two years. These combined efforts will touch 50 million students and their families in every school district in America. Accessing Healthy, Affordable Food

More than 23 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income urban and rural neighborhoods that are more than a mile from a supermarket. These communities, where access to affordable, quality, and nutritious foods is limited, are known as food deserts. Lack of

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access is one reason why many children are not eating recommended levels of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. And food insecurity and hunger among children is widespread. A recent USDA report showed that in 2008, an estimated 49.1 million people, including 16.7 million children, lived in households that experienced hunger multiple times throughout the year. The Administration, through new federal investments and the creation of public private partnerships, will:

**Eliminate Food Deserts:** As part of the President's proposed FY 2011 budget, the Administration announced the new Healthy Food Financing Initiative - a partnership between the U.S. Departments of Treasury, Agriculture and Health and Human Services that will invest \$400 million a year to help bring grocery stores to underserved areas and help places such as convenience stores and bodegas carry healthier food options. Through these initiatives and private sector engagement, the Administration will work to eliminate food deserts across the country within seven years.

**Increase Farmers Markets:** The President's 2011 Budget proposes an additional \$5 million investment in the Farmers Market Promotion Program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture which provides grants to establish, and improve access to, farmers markets.

### **Increasing Physical Activity**

Children need 60 minutes of active play each day. Yet, the average American child spends more than 7.5 hours a day watching TV and movies, using cell phones and computers, and playing video games, and only a third of high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity. Through public-private partnerships, and reforms of existing federal programs, the Administration will address this imbalance by:

**Expanding and Modernizing the President's Physical Fitness Challenge:** In the coming weeks, the President will be naming new members to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, housed at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The council will be charged with increasing participation in the President's Challenge and with modernizing and expanding it, so that it is consistent with the latest research and science.

**Doubling the Number of Presidential Active Lifestyle Awards:** As part of the President's Physical Fitness Council, the President will challenge both children and adults to commit to physical activity five days a week, for six weeks. As part of the First Lady's commitment to solve the problem of childhood obesity in a generation, the Council will double the number of children in the 2010-2011 school year who earn a "Presidential Active Lifestyle Award" for meeting this challenge.

**Safe and Healthy Schools:** The U.S. Department of Education will be working with Congress on the creation of a Safe and Healthy Schools fund as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act this year. This fund will support schools with comprehensive strategies to improve their school environment, including efforts to get children physically active in and outside of school, and improve the quality and availability of physical education.

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Professional Sports: Professional athletes from twelve leagues including the NFL, MLB, WNBA, and MLS have joined the First Lady on the Let's Move campaign and will promote "60 Minutes of Play a Day" through sports clinics, public service announcements, and more to help reach the national goal of solving the problem of childhood obesity in a generation.

### **Partnership for a Healthier America**

Core to the success of this initiative is the recognition that government approaches alone will not solve this challenge. Achieving the goal will require engaging in partnerships with States, communities, and the non-profit and for-profit private sectors. To support this effort, several foundations are coming together to organize and fund a new central foundation - the Partnership for a Healthier America - to serve as a nonpartisan convener across the private, non-profit and public sectors to accelerate existing efforts addressing childhood obesity and to facilitate commitments towards the national goal of solving childhood obesity within a generation. The Partnership for a Healthier America is being created by a number of leading health care foundations and childhood obesity non-profits, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The California Endowment, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Alliance for Healthier Generation, Kaiser Permanente, and Nemours, and will seek to add new members in the days and months ahead.