

An Active Life Can Save a Life

There once was a 4-year-old girl, who was about to enter kindergarten and recognized the weight she had been gaining but she refused to exercise. Her parents didn't have enough time to cook so they ate fast food instead, and her school rarely offered fruits and vegetables. Now as an obese adult, she has diabetes and high blood pressure and wishes she had lived a healthy lifestyle when she was young. In Hawaii we typically eat spam musubis, malasadas, Portuguese sausages, and a multitude of other foods that consist of saturated fat, which can cause obesity over the years. However, there is a solution. Schools, parents, and adolescents can encourage kids to get active with games that anyone can play, and eat healthier with more choices of fresh produce being provided.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10.3 percent of Hawaii's children in 2014 from the ages of 2 to 4 were classified as obese, and 27 percent of high school students were overweight or obese in 2012, according to the Hawaii State Department of Education. Although Hawaii doesn't have obesity rates as high as other states, as these children grow older, they will be more likely to be obese as adults. If they continue their unhealthy lifestyle, obesity can cause many problems such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cardiovascular disease, and many more.

There are many ways we can help prevent our keiki from becoming obese as adults. Hawaii created a marathon, the Keiki Great Aloha Run, that encourages kids to start exercising. The limitation of this solution is the event only occurs once a year, and during the other 364 days left in the year, they are not inspired to get out of their homes. By starting out small, we can encourage children to play outside every day. We can teach them healthy habits when they are

young, so as they mature they develop the habits of eating healthy and exercising. Although adolescents have school most of the year, they can volunteer at schools during the summer and encourage young children to exercise by playing with them outside. This will educate them on how being active is important, but can also be very effective to the children as they grow older because it shows them the joy in exercising.

Adults can find ways to encourage their children or others through the Hawaii 5210 program. This program's states that children should eat five fruits, roots, and veggies, two hours or less of screen time, one hour or more of physical activity, and zero sugary drinks. Parents, instead of opting to buy fast food, can go to their local grocery store to buy fruits and vegetables for dinner. Although fast food restaurants have been trying to provide healthier options, by making these choices more expensive, they discourage the buyers from buying the cheaper options with more calories.

Schools are required by law to let students have at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity. As the students reach middle school, they are no longer encouraged to run around during their breaks as younger students are. Schools can offer different activities, such as soccer scrimmage, sharks and minnows, and dodgeball, each day of the week during breaks, to increase physical activity within the school. The Department of Education can put a budget to provide healthier alternatives for schools to buy fresh produce to give the kids a broader choice of vegetables and fruits to go with their school lunch. If the students are able to choose their favorite vegetables, they would be more determined to eat them than getting others that they dislike.

In 50 years, not only will Hawaii's child obesity rates escalate, but so will adolescent and adult obesity rates. Clarence T.C. Ching envisioned a better Hawaii with not only healthy land, but healthy people. It is a chain reaction, that if they are obese as a child and continue their bad habits, the more difficult it is to fix them. We can encourage children to play outside more often, and provide them with better choices of food. This way, children will be able to develop good dietary and exercising habits before they become obese. Showing the youth how to live an active life can prevent high obesity rates for each generation to come.

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