

Health & Wellness with the Buffalo Bills

*Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence
Buffalo, New York*

Students at the Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence know how to combat obesity thanks to a Family Sports Night cosponsored by the Buffalo Bills football team, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Rite Aid, and Kaleida Health. “This event reinforced the year-long efforts of the staff to promote healthy eating and lifestyle decisions,” said one member of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). “We heard so many positive comments from our families, volunteers, and the Buffalo Bills.”

When kindergarten through sixth-grade students and their families arrived for the two-hour event, they received a schedule indicating when each grade level should report to a specific activity. As they rotated through the stations, families worked together to earn stamps for their Healthy Living Passports. Three Buffalo Bills players ran a mini training camp in the gym. They explained the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. And, accompanied by cheering from the Bills’ mascot, Billy Buffalo, they paced children and adults through football drills such as blocking dummies, high stepping, long snapping, and an obstacle course.

Families walked around the school building using pedometers and water bottles donated by Blue Cross Blue Shield. During the walk, they stopped to have their blood pressure checked and body mass index measured. In the cafeteria, volunteers served healthy snacks of fresh fruit, low-fat milk products, orange juice, and spring water, all generously donated by Upstate Farms.

Towards the end of the evening, the Buffalo Bills raffled off items for the families that completed their Healthy Living Passports. Prizes included a signed football, sports jerseys, and 300 tickets to an upcoming game. The Bills’ strength and conditioning coach talked about the important connections between health, fitness, and success in school to close the event.

To publicize Family Sports Night, the ATP sent home invitations and special reminders to families. They also placed an article in the *Buffalo Public Schools Report*, which goes out to all families in the district and many local businesses and organizations, and contacted local television stations, which sent reporters to cover the event. Parent volunteers, faculty, Blue Cross Blue Shield volunteers, and players and coaches from the Buffalo Bills helped the evening run smoothly.

Family Sports Night tied together several health-related initiatives in place throughout the year, such as classroom visits from the school nurse and social worker, healthy school lunches served in the cafeteria, and assemblies by Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Buffalo Bills. The Buffalo Bills also printed calendars listing school events and healthy eating and exercise tips, which were sent home to students and their families.

As a result of the combined efforts of the ATP and the four community partners, 450 students, their families, and community members learned about fitness and healthy choices in a fun-filled setting. Next year, the ATP

plans to enlist more volunteers to decrease wait times at individual stations. The Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence is definitely on track to help its students and families develop life-long healthy habits.

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