The Y Encourages Families to Address Healthy Living during Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and the Rogue Valley Family YMCA — a leader in youth development and healthy living—wants to help families understand the risks of childhood obesity and how to incorporate regular physical activity and healthy eating into their lives.

Childhood obesity rates have soared over the last few decades. Nationally, one in three children is obese or overweight. More alarming, obesity puts children at risk for chronic diseases often seen in adults, such as high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

"At the YMCA, we want families to understand the risks of childhood obesity and the lifetime benefits of eating right and getting physically active," said Jeni Beck, Fitness Director. "Small changes can make a big difference when it comes to healthy living and the Y is a great place for families to get started."

This health crisis sheds light on the need to provide children and parents with the resources and the support they need, emphasizing that small steps can lead to sustained changes to reverse the childhood obesity trend. The following tips can help families live healthier:

1. **Eat Healthy**: Make water the drink of choice (supplemented by 100 percent fruit juices and low-fat milk) and have fruits and vegetables available at every meal. Snack time should include foods that contain whole grains and lean protein instead of saturated and trans fats.

2. **Play Every Day/Go Outside**: Kids and adults should have at least an hour a day of unstructured play outside (when possible) and break a sweat at least three times a week by getting 20 minutes or more of physical activity.

3. **Get Together**: At least once a day families should dine together, with kids involved in meal preparation and clean up. In addition, adults should spend one-on-one time each day with their kids.

4. **Reduce Screen Time**: Time spent in front of a television, computer, cell phone and video game should be limited to two hours per day.

5. **Sleep Well**: Kids and adults need to keep a regular sleep schedule—10-12 hours per night for kids and seven to eight hours for adults.

For more information about YMCA healthy living programs visit www.rvymca.org or contact Jeni Beck, Fitness Director, at 541-772-6295 x204 or jbeck@rvymca.org.

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