

CANFIT

Connection

The Quarterly Newsletter of the California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program

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Marketing Junk Food to Children, part 2

Youth are the market of the present, as well as the future. Food and beverage marketers spend about \$13 billion annually on attracting child consumers and influencing their purchasing power. In 1997, children under 12 spent \$23.4 billion of their own money on food and entertainment. In addition, every year children influence close to \$500 billion of their parents' purchases.

Food marketers reach young people through various channels (e.g., television, in-school and in-store marketing, kids clubs, the Internet, and toy products). It is estimated that by the time a student graduates from high school he or she will have viewed 360,000 commercials. Clever tactics such as celebrity endorsements, logos on scoreboards and banners, school fundraisers, textbook covers, and fast food restaurants in close proximity to schools, are used to entice youth to spend and to consume unhealthy food.

It would be one thing if the advertisements encouraged youth to tell their parents to buy more fruits and vegetables at the nearest farmers market. Instead the products being pushed on youth are non-nutritious junk foods in oversized amounts. This places a burden on low-income children of color who already face increasing overweight and obesity prevalence rates. According to Velma LaPoint, PhD from Howard University, "One impact of food and beverage marketing is the development of overweight and obesity."

Marketing junk foods to children creates additional challenges for parents. When children pressure their parents into buying the advertised products, parents are torn between appeasing their children and purchasing more nutritious food items that lack sophisticated marketing. As more families must stretch their food dollar to the limit, they risk replacing nutritious food

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From the Executive Director

As CANFit faces the next 10 years, we will continue to focus on youth in after-school environments and work to build the capacity of low-income communities of color so that youth have the knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and community support that they need to live healthier lives.

CANFit will lead the way by:

- * providing resources through grant making, training, consultations, conferences, and scholarships,
- * initiating leadership development programs for youth, parents, and community members,
- * advancing public and local policies that improve eating and physical activity environments in low-income communities of color, and
- * creating culturally-specific campaigns that target low-income multi-ethnic adolescents via radio, digital media, billboards, contests, and concert promotions.

There is an increasing need for health promotion and obesity prevention programs which address cultural specificity within the within the context of California's diverse society. CANFit is such a program, and, with your support, will continue to work in the coming decade to ensure that youth serve an integral role in developing community solutions to the epidemic of chronic disease that is crippling and killing our population. We welcome your involvement..

Examples of Junk Food Marketing Strategies

Channel One

An in-class TV news program with extensive junk food commercials in 12,000 middle and high schools

Krispy Kreme Good Grades Program

Elementary school children get a doughnut for each "A" on their report card

McTeachers Nights

Local McDonald's restaurants host nights during which school staff assume the job duties of a McDonalds worker in order to receive part of the proceeds to pay for school supplies

Marketing (Cont.)

items with unhealthy ones. Food manufacturers and restaurants not only undermine children's health by promoting unhealthy food and endorsing erroneous links between fitness and junk food consumption, they also utilize aggressive marketing techniques that can have damaging psychological effects on children. Dr. Allen D. Kanner states, "As children are exposed to more and more advertising, they come to believe the commercial message that they are valuable because of their purchasing power. Thus, their self-image or their identity becomes partially based on this belief, and they come to judge themselves in terms of what they buy or how much money they have."

Here are some strategies parents and youth service-providers who are interested in the well being of children can use:

- Develop community responses, including local policies, to regulate marketing to kids
- Teach children to critically analyze marketing messages
- Encourage children to watch less television and to participate more in physical activities
- Set an example for children by watching less television and being active
- Document food advertising and promotion in your school or neighborhood to see how and where residents are encouraged to eat unhealthy foods
- Network with community groups to organize policy and action agendas

Sources:

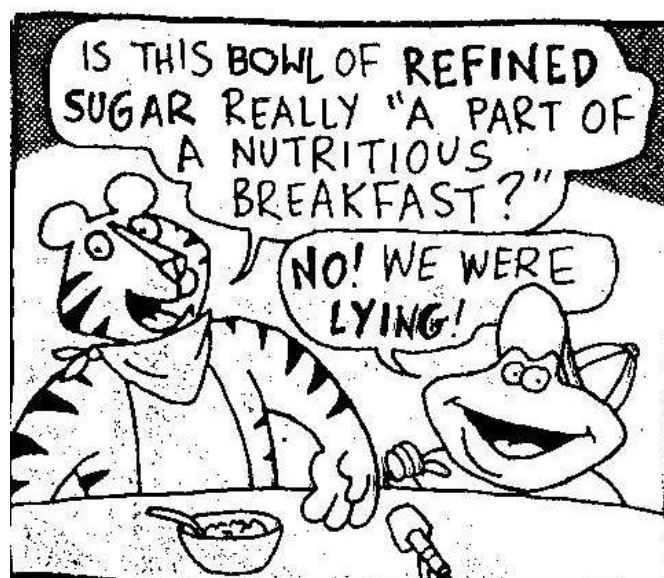
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CANFit Reaches a Milestone

On October 9, 2003, CANFit celebrated ten years of work promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing obesity among low-income adolescents of color. The WeCANFit Gala at the Oakland Museum featured delicious, healthy food and wine provided by some of the Bay Area's leading restaurants and wineries. Representing CANFit's diverse target population, youth from local programs performed hip hop, Colombian folkloric dance, Polynesian dance, American Indian tribal songs, and spoken word.

In addition to the food, fellowship, and entertainment, the more than 200 guests in attendance enjoyed a retrospective of CANFit's history and accomplishments over the last decade. In 1993, CANFit was established to address the unique nutrition and physical activity issues of low-income, ethnic youth. Since then, CANFit has provided grants and training to 65 organizations to enable them to change the lives of African American, Latino, American Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Pacific Islander, Cambodian, and Mien youth and their families through an innovative grants program. CANFit has also awarded over 100 scholarships to diverse students in the fields of nutrition, physical activity, and culinary arts and developed award-winning, youth-friendly educational materials.

Most importantly, the event fostered partnerships among sports and media celebrities, restauranters, grassroots organizers, policymakers, and health professionals. Although CANFit's first decade has seen significant victories in the fight against obesity, more needs to be done. The current reality is that most low-income youth still live in environments where it is unsafe to be physically active and where the healthiest foods are neither affordable nor readily available. Fortunately, thanks to the momentum built by its supporters, CANFit is well prepared for what it will face in years to come.



Thanks to Our Donors!

The WeCANFit Gala was a huge success, raising nearly \$25,000 for the CANFit community grants fund. We'd like to send our deepest appreciation to everyone who participated.

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