

## It's Never Too Early for Children to Start Healthy Habits

According to the *NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) Obesity Data Book 2010*, 17.8% of children ages 2 to 5 are obese and one-third of all third graders are overweight or obese. To fight this growing epidemic, Upper Valley HEAL provided NAP SACC consultations in seven early care programs and four home-based child care programs. An estimated 508 children and 136 staff were impacted.

NAP SACC is an evidence-based intervention selected by the NH DHHS Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) and is a proven tool to enhance nutrition and physical activity policies in early child care settings. Every participating program commits to making at least one nutrition and one physical activity policy change; examples include switching from whole to skim milk, adding more physical activity throughout the day, and providing more fruits and vegetables. Several child care programs have added raised gardens to provide fruits and vegetables and more



opportunities for physical activity.

“Children are trying some fruits and vegetables for the first time and are now asking parents for healthier snacks,” according to Gerard Thompson, Executive Director of the Green Mountain Children’s Center, a non-profit child care provider with campuses in Lebanon and Claremont, New Hampshire, and Hartford, Vermont. “Teachers and staff have also noticed that with more physical activity breaks, the kids are able to focus a little bit longer on their tasks.”

## Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice for Employees

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) has a long history of instituting policies for healthy living for their employees, patients, and community members. But their move to stop selling sugar-sweetened beverages – including soda and sports drinks – caused considerable debate on and off their Lebanon campus when they introduced the policy in early 2012.

Evidence shows a direct correlation between sugar-sweetened beverages, obesity, and a number of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. “Our goal is to change the environment so it is easier to consume healthier foods and beverages,” said Deborah Keane, Director of Food & Nutrition Services and member of the Healthy Living Committee at DHMC. “Research shows that this will lead to long-term changes in diet, and a healthier work force and community in the long run.”

Keane said she has noticed that employees who would typically drink soda are now drinking more water and milk; sales of plain water increased over 30 percent, and sales of milk increased approximately 15 percent as compared to before the elimination of sugar-sweetened beverages.