



For Immediate Release

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Learning to Live a Healthy Lifestyle Begins Early

National Farm Safety and Health Week is a good time for parents to educate their children on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Sept. 15, 2011 — Learning how to lead a healthy lifestyle can be easier said than done. It's important that adults remember that we were taught these habits as children and that we need to educate our own children to lead healthy lifestyles as well. Childhood obesity has tripled in the last three decades. In 1980, 6 percent of children from ages 6 to 11 were considered obese; in 2008, 19.6 percent were considered obese. Teaching children little things about living healthy at a young age will help them to start good habits now that will continue as they develop into adults.

“As parents, we often do what it takes to make sure our children are living healthy lives. What we forget is that it's also necessary to teach children how to make healthy decisions on their own, because ultimately the choices children make for themselves will lead to how they live their lives into adulthood,” says Bernard Geschke, program specialist with the Progressive Agriculture Foundation® (PAF).

What are some important points to share with your child about maintaining a healthy lifestyle?

1. Eat a balanced diet with low amounts of sugars and fats. Most people don't get the recommended amount of whole-grain foods, fruits and vegetables based on the new ChooseMyPlate.gov eating guide.
2. Stay hydrated. Our bodies are made up of more than 70 percent water. It's recommended that people drink eight, 8-ounce glasses of water a day.
3. Exercise regularly. The Mayo Clinic recommends exercising for 30 minutes each day to reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity.
4. Eat healthy snacks. Many children opt for treats and other unhealthy options. Choosing sustainable snacks like fruit, vegetables, whole-grain products and low-fat dairy products will provide more nutrition and keep kids fuller longer.

Safety tips such as these are examples of the things children learn when they attend Progressive Agriculture Safety Days®, which are held each year in more than 400 local communities throughout North America.

In addition to offering helpful tips about healthy living, PAF has started a pilot program to help curb childhood obesity through healthy lifestyle education. The program includes five school-based safety and health day programs selected to receive resources that educate children about living a healthy lifestyle. Educational lessons will focus on the USDA's ChooseMyPlate eating guide, the importance of eating healthy foods, and the need to engage in physical activity. The same five communities selected during the pilot phase of the project will also hold health and nutrition symposia that will discuss ways of providing healthier food choices for children in school cafeterias. The program is being funded by Novus International, Farm Credit, Agrium and MetLife Foundation as a challenge grant. The grant will also provide the same five schools with a stipend to create healthier lunch options for children in rural areas.

Safety Days are fun, hands-on, one-day events that provide children with education and training that can keep them and those around them safer and healthier on a farm or ranch, and at home. The program explores more than 30 topics, including ATVs, firearms, water/outdoor safety and knife safety. PAF provides the curriculum, coordinator training, take-home bags, T-shirts and other resources to help make the Safety Days a reality. PAF is committed to providing farm and ranch safety and health education to children across rural America in an effort to reduce farm- or ranch-related injuries and death.

About Progressive Agriculture Foundation

The Progressive Agriculture Safety Day program is the largest rural safety and health education program for children in North America and a program of the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation. The Foundation's mission is to provide education and training to make farm, ranch and rural life safer and healthier for children and their communities. In 2008, PAF was awarded the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance National Charity Seal, demonstrating its commitment to accountability and ethical practices. Safety Day applications are due each July 15 for Safety Days that will be conducted the following calendar year.

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