

December 1, 2009

Goodrell kids help peers become healthy

Middle school students attend Super-Power Summit with famous and healthy Iowans.

Twelve students from Goodrell Middle School will be spearheading efforts to help their classmates become more physically active and eat healthy, nutritious foods.

The students from Goodrell, a traditional school on the city's east side that is open to students from throughout the metro area, were among more than 300 Iowa middle school students and teachers who participated in the second annual Super-Power Summit. The day-long wellness kickoff was sponsored by the Midwest Dairy Council, the Iowa Department of Education's Team Nutrition Program and Iowa State University Extension for Families and 4H, Iowa Partners: Action for Healthy Kids.

"The best motivators for students to lead a healthy lifestyle are their peers," said Melissa Young, school nutrition coordinator for the Midwest Dairy Council. "Our goal is to have the Goodrell Middle School students and their adult advisers go back and lead wellness programs in their schools that stress nutritious diets and at least one hour of physical activity every day."

Headlining the summit was Charlie Wittmack, a Des Moines attorney who became the first Iowan to climb to the top of Mount Everest. Wittmack explained the importance of nutrient-rich foods in helping him prepare for a lack of food and oxygen during the final days of the climb.

"The milk and other dairy foods, whole grains, and plenty of fruits and vegetables, and lean meat I ate before the climb assured that I had the strength and endurance to reach the top of the world," Wittmack said.

Jared Clauss, an academic all-American and All Big Ten player at the University of Iowa with four years' experience in the NFL, showed the students models of muscle and fat. Clauss shed 100 pounds since his playing days to pursue new challenges, including scaling the tallest peaks in North and South America.

Tim Dwight, a standout receiver and kick returner at Iowa and, for 10 years in the NFL, also was on hand and explained how a nutritious diet and exercise helped him succeed against players who were as much as a foot taller and 100 pounds larger.

The summit participants took to the skywalks of downtown Des Moines to deliver their messages of healthy nutrition and fitness to the public. They offered informational fliers; held Jazzercise, hula hoop, jump rope and hopscotch demonstrations; and engaged passers-by with tests of strength and agility.

"Our team was highly motivated by the speakers and the activities they participated in to lead the efforts to make wellness a daily part of their lives and the lives of their classmates," said John Walling, the Goodrell team's adult adviser and a physical education teacher.

Goodrell students and representatives from the other schools represented at the Super-Power Summit are eligible to apply for \$1,500 grants provided by the Midwest Dairy Council to cover costs of implementing school-based wellness initiatives.

- Submitted by Bill Brewer, ZLR Ignition

