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Essex families recharge at active gathering

Lynn Monty, Free Press Staff Writer

In an effort to break cabin fever's winter grasp, families gathered together for fun and food at the Essex Elementary School on Jan. 22.

Essex Town School District Child Nutrition Coordinator Bonnie Szarkowski helped bring a Mini ReCharge grant offered by the National Football League and Vermont Action for Healthy Kids to the Essex School District for a free youth fitness event for children kindergarten through fifth grade and their families.

"Many hours have been spent to make this event combine nutrition and physical activity," Szarkowski said. "The Vermont Action for Healthy Kids team is a coalition of health and nutrition professionals and other community members, including myself, who take action in schools, communities and regions to make positive change. This Vermont team supports healthy eating and active living through a variety of statewide resources and programs that include this Mini ReCharge event."

Parent volunteer and event coordinator Kelly Rivers said she organized a similar event last year for families at the school. "Hosting something like this in the middle of winter is a great way to shake out the cabin fever," she said. "We did it for the first time last year and it was a great time so that helped with getting everyone motivated to come out again." About 30 families participated.

Parents and children ran three-legged races, relays and jumped rope among many other activities in the gym and healthy food was provided in the cafeteria.

"Nothing can be more important than the health of our children," Szarkowski said. "Nutrition and physical fitness go hand in hand. They can't be separated."

-- Lynn Monty, Free Press
