

Program has new approach to remedying kids' obesity

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WHITTIER - Type in the term "childhood obesity" on any Internet search engine and the number of items that come up is staggering, says local fitness trainer Michael Seril.

So it's no surprise that parents still aren't switching their families to healthier lifestyles, Seril says - but he's hoping to change that with Fit Family Community, a new Whittier-area program sponsored through his Excellence Through Exercise Foundation.

He's calling out all parents with inactive, overweight or obese children who want to improve their family's health, including realistic tips on incorporating exercise into the daily routine, reducing stress, increasing energy and eating a well-balanced meal.

"What we'll provide is a plan," said Seril, 32. "With roundtable meetings, informative newsletters, online fitness and exercise tips - it's basically an ongoing educational resource for people to get the knowledge and skills they need to help their family."

Seril has already won over parents at Foster Road Elementary School in La Mirada, where he conducted a Family Exercise Night last fall and is helping the school improve its PE program through the ETE Foundation.

"It was great," said Foster Road Elementary parent Leanna Clark, 31. "He got our kids excited about even just the littlest of fitness."

"He was showing us how we don't have to go to a gym or run a mile - he was showing us little things we can do to get up off the couch and do something with our children," Clark said. "The kids were really excited about it, and we had a great turnout."

The event prompted Clark and other families to participate in one of Seril's hiking trips, which he hopes to provide every month as part of the Fit Family Community.

"He comes out and gets you motivated," Clark said. "And what I really like about his organization is that they do things for the community. He's always trying to get people in there and get them started."

"He's willing to help people out," she said.

Seril plans to distribute fliers about Fit Family Community this week to parents in the East Whittier City School District, but any area parent is invited to join - all they have to do is submit an essay no longer than 100 words to say why they'd like to be in the program.

"What I envision is to have a Fit Family program at every elementary school, in the same way that every school has a PTA," Seril said.

"That's where I want it to go, and I think it will work because childhood obesity is a big problem," he said. "This is a great opportunity for parents to gather the information and resources that will help them - and they don't have to pay for anything."

The first Fit Family event will take place sometime in March, Seril said. More details on Fit Family can be found at www.excellencethroughexercise.org, or by contacting Seril at (714) 306-9002.

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