



Family weight loss camp targets young kids

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By Megan Rauscher

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - The nation's first weight loss camp for children as young as age five will open this summer. Located on Clear Lake in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Wellspring Family Camp provides a scientifically based weight loss and behavioral change immersion program for young overweight and obese children and their parents.

While existing Wellspring weight loss camps operating in New York, North Carolina, California, and the UK only accept children older than age 10, the Wellspring Family Camp is designed specifically for children between 5 and 13 years old. Each child must be accompanied by one or both parents while at the camp.

Ryan Craig, president of Wellspring Camps told Reuters Health: "We know that the Wellspring approach works with older teens and young adults and there is a huge need for younger kids."

According to Craig, "91 percent of Wellspring campers maintain or continue the weight loss achieved at camp in the 9 months after returning home. The average Wellspring camper goes on to lose an additional 7.4 lbs. in the 9 months after returning home." In addition, parents attending the camp can expect to lose 8 to 10 pounds, if they are overweight.

With the younger kids, "the key is to have the family involved," Craig said.

Several factors distinguish the Wellspring approach to weight loss from that of most weight loss camps, according to Dr. Daniel S. Kirschenbaum, clinical director of Healthy Living Academies, which operates the Wellspring camps.

"First of all, this is a comprehensive weight control program where parents receive intense training on proven techniques that promote healthy, long-term weight loss in young children," he said in a statement.

"Second, parents learn skills that improve their families' eating and activity patterns, and they learn to recognize and better manage stress that can result in emotional eating. Finally," Kirschenbaum said, "families develop an entirely new skill-set for continued weight loss at home."

Wellspring Family Camp starts June 25, 2006 with four 2-week sessions that run through August 19, 2006. More information on the camp is available at www.wellspringfamilycamp.com.

The Wellspring Family Camp is a program of the Aspen Education Group, which provides a variety of education and therapeutic programs in 12 states for struggling and underachieving young people including boarding school and wilderness therapy, is available at www.aspeneducation.com.