

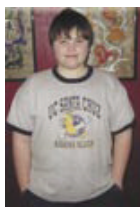
# Healthy Lifestyle

Nutrition and fitness tips to help combat the childhood obesity epidemic

## Atlanta Teen Sheds More Than Just Weight at Summer Camp

An essay written by Atlantan Michael Craigmile has changed his life in more ways than one.

Last summer, Craigmile wrote an essay for the *Get Fit With Michigan Apples Essay Contest* that captured judges' attention in a contest created to help fight childhood obesity. He was one of four nationwide winners in the first-time contest sponsored by the Michigan Apple Committee and Wellspring Camps.



Craigmile's scholarship is valued at \$6,000.

During camp, Craigmile dropped 19 pounds and continues to do well, says his mom, Kelly. "When I

went to pick Michael up from his four-week session at Wellspring Adventure Camp, he was sparkingly happy, very proud of himself and 19 pounds lighter," says Craigmile. "Since then, he has maintained his commitment to the program and has maintained his weight loss."

Campers at Wellspring lose an average of four pounds per week, according to Deb Sweeney Whitmore, executive director of Wellspring Camps. "What they gain is even more important," she says. "Campers learn lifelong healthy living skills, and parents continually comment how their child returns home healthier, happier and more self-confident."

Mom Kelly was so impressed with her son's dedication that the entire Craigmile family got involved in the crusade to be healthy too, she says. The family has adjusted their lifestyle to the Wellspring program, focusing on long-term weight loss. They all walk 10,000 steps each day, with everyone dutifully wearing a pedometer to track those steps, and they have switched to a low-fat diet.

— Tiffany Capuano



■ **Make a "no escalators" rule** and ask kids to help enforce it. By always seeking out stairs when you're at the mall, you teach kids to build exercise into their day.

■ **Connect exercise with activities kids already like to do.** For example, if your kids love video games, the Wii can be a great form of exercise. If they're interested in botany, take them on weekly nature walks where they can identify trees, plants and bugs to their heart's content. But what if all they want to do is watch TV? Fine — just tell them they can watch their favorite show only if they exercise while it's on. They might walk on the treadmill, walk or run in place, stretch, or lift hand weights.

■ **Use books, videos and other stories to help drive the point home.** If you have a teenage daughter who loves to read, give her a subscription to a fitness magazine. Give your 10-year-old son a martial arts video aimed at kids. There are lots of kid-friendly fitness videos on the market!

■ **Let your child wear a pedometer every day.** Kids who love gadgets (and isn't that all kids?) will enjoy measuring their steps. Remind them that 10,000 is the number of steps to aim for each day. Rather than seeming like a dreaded chore, that daily walk will become a fun challenge!



■ **Consider exercising in the morning.** If you try to squeeze fitness activities in during the evenings, they'll rarely happen. Between homework, after-school events, dinner and chores, you'll just run out of time. Try getting up 30 minutes earlier than usual and going for a walk as a family. It's amazing how much better morning exercise makes everyone feel!

What you're really doing when you model healthy behaviors for your kids day in and day out — and incorporate those behaviors into family life — is teaching them by example to assume personal responsibility for their health.

It's all about the decisions we make every day. Every time you serve broccoli instead of fries, every time you hand out water bottles instead of soda cans, every time you turn off the TV and go for a family bike ride, you're helping your kids learn that lesson in the most powerful possible way — by living it. There's no better gift you can give them. □

Thomas B. Gilliam, Ph.D., is the coauthor of the book *Move It. Lose It. Live Healthy. The Simple Truth About Achieving & Maintaining a Healthy Body Weight, and creator of the "Move It. Lose It. Live Healthy," wellness program.*

## Make Fitness a Family Affair

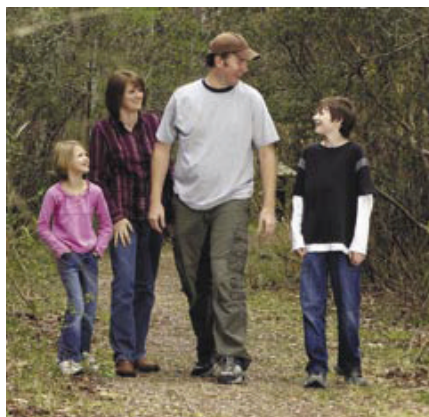
by Tom Gilliam

In a world set up to make kids fat, how can you make sure yours aren't? The solution is simple: Don't preach to your kids from the "parent pulpit"

and impose a bunch of arbitrary diet and exercise rules. Instead, live a healthy body weight message, every day, and your kids will naturally come along for the ride.

Research shows over and over that the only way to combat childhood obesity is to make nutrition and exercise family priorities. In fact, more and more companies are teaching the "family fitness" principle to their employees. It's a huge trend right now.

Of course you want your kids to be healthy because you love them! And — sorry, couch potatoes and junk food lovers! — that means you, the parents, may have to change your ways as well!



■ **Find fun activities you can do as a group.** However much you may wish your kids would do daily calisthenics while you supervise and sip a cool drink (kidding!), parents need to be part of the action too! Take regular hikes in the woods. Go inline skating at the park. On a sunny day, create a crazy obstacle course using jump ropes, pogo sticks, large bouncy balls, and maybe even a slip-n-slide. When it rains, stick in a yoga tape and have fun bending and stretching as a family.

Yes, you want to show your kids that fitness is fun, but you also want to show them that it's "normal." Think about it: If you sit in front of the TV every day after work, that will come to seem like the normal way to spend time. We learn what we live.

■ **Pair your child with a buddy for exercise.** If your daughter's friend is into horseback riding or ballet, encourage your daughter to get involved, too. If the kid next door swims at the local YMCA, get your son a membership too and suggest that they carpool. Here's one area where peer pressure can be positive!

■ **Challenge kids to help you find ways to "sneak in" exercise.** For example, too many of us obsessively look for the closest parking spot to our destination. Reverse this trend! Ask kids to help you find the space that's farthest away from the grocery store or mall.

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