

School Choice

Expel Junk Food, Support Good Health

By **Nicolle Fernandes**



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In today's media-centered society, it's hard to get through the day without video footage or photos depicting the obesity epidemic overtaking the nation. What you may not know – and what is promising news – is that its steep rise is now beginning to level off.

This means that the multifaceted efforts used to confront the obesity crisis have finally met with some success. But do not be deceived; the crisis remains. Continued stringent efforts to support sustainable weight loss is the best way to achieve a healthier America.

And since we must continue this battle, let's turn the attention to our children. Current statistics indicate that nearly a third of American children are either overweight or obese, which puts them at a greater risk for debilitating illnesses such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, gout and arthritis – just to name a few.

Research indicates that children consume up to half of their daily calories while in school. Therefore, a logical place to start addressing the obesity crisis would be to evaluate the food

choices they are offered. This is critical because once children lock in a preference for foods low in nutrients and high in sugar, salt and fat – more commonly known as junk food – it is harder for them to willingly give it up. This can occur despite education on the ill effects of unhealthy foods.

While the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 is a good start, schools must take a stronger stand by banning junk foods on school premises, including vending machines and other fund-raisers. I believe that schools could do this with a campaign to “offer only healthy choices” (basically the same as banning junk foods, but it sounds more acceptable). This campaign would help encourage healthier habits that may be sustained over time.

We like to believe that schools provide a safe learning environment for children to develop skills and prepare to take on the world. Why then, when it comes to food, are we



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allowing the world (advertising and unhealthy food offerings) to possess children even before they fully comprehend the consequences on their health and the possible claims on their lives?

It is important to note that changing behaviors can be a struggle, especially when food is involved. Interestingly, one solution to this situation is a simple avoidance of the temptation. Given this premise, eradicating junk food in schools would not only eliminate the inducement, but provide students with a favorable learning environment for developing tastes and habits connected with healthful choices.

Consider also the fact that a student's health is strongly linked to his or her academic success. It becomes more imperative that we support our children in learning as best as we can so that they can be highly successful in school. Isn't that every parent's expectation and desire?

INFORMATION LINK

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BizVoice, Chamber Earn ISAE Awards

The award count for *BizVoice* climbed to 61 before the end of 2012, while the Indiana Chamber's Legislative Dinner also earned top honors in the Indiana Society of Association Executives' (ISAE) STAR Awards.

ISAE is the statewide membership and development group for Indiana association professionals. The STAR Awards, in their 11th year, took place at the Dallara IndyCar Factory in Speedway. The *BizVoice* and Chamber honors:

- **Outstanding Magazine/Newspaper:** *BizVoice* is the leading statewide business magazine, providing 15,000 company, political and community leaders with business news and analysis. Its 61 national and state awards have been for writing, design and overall excellence over the past 13 years.
- **Outstanding Individual Program/Event:** The Chamber's 2012 Legislative Dinner included former congressman and statesman Lee Hamilton as featured speaker. More than 500 attendees came together in February in this annual networking event during the Indiana General Assembly session. Indiana breweries and wineries were also highlighted at the reception and dinner.

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