

New programme aimed at getting youngsters fit

This is a weekly column by Kathleen McQuaide, a sports scientist and health promotions manager at the Sports Science Institute of South Africa. The column will run for six weeks in the Atlantic Sun.

South Africa is a land of paradoxes. While we might achieve world-class accolades on a sporting front, we certainly are not yet winning the battle of overcoming inactivity and obesity in our nation's youth.

This places them at substantial risk for chronic diseases of lifestyle such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and certain types of cancer.

The 2007 "Healthy Active Kids Report Card", which is an attempt to alert all South Africans to the state of health of our nation's children and to give a snapshot of the current situation, revealed some shocking facts.

It gave South African children a C- for their overall health. Forty percent are getting little or no moderate to vigorous activity each week, which resulted in a score of a C- for activity levels.

The most vulnerable groups are 16 to 19-year-old girls and children from disadvantaged communities.

Sadly, the most commonly reported leisure time activity in our youth is cell phone use, and sitting in front of the TV.

The statistics regarding overweight youngsters are no more comforting, and South African children score a very disappointing C. More than 30% of adolescent girls and nearly 10% of boys are either overweight or obese.

Primary schools show a similar trend with 22% of girls and 17% of boys falling into this category and in a combined sample of children under the age of nine



■ Cheering learners from Gardenia Primary get moving in preparation for the Move for your Health 5km and 8km walk/run event.

years old, an astonishing 17% were already overweight or obese.

Fortunately in Cape Town, we have an event towards which we can all train – both adults and children. The Move for your Health 5km and 8km walk/run event forms part of a global World Health Organisation campaign to promote and encourage regular physical activity for a healthy lifestyle.

The Sports Science Institute of South Africa (SSISA), Celtic Harriers, Woolworths, Volkswagen Claremont, in conjunction with the Western Cape Department of Sports and Recreation, and the City of Cape Town have partnered to spread the campaign message "Move for Your Health".

The event will be staged at Celtic Harriers Running Club on

Sunday May 18 and incorporates a schools mass participatioocompetition to further encourage our youth to get active

The four schools with the highest percentage of learners participating in the events, will win prize money that must be used to buy equipment for the school's physical education programme.

To help learners to get fit for the 5km event, we will be running a six-week training programme.

Accompanying each week's programme, will be practical information about leading a healthy lifestyle.

We will have the first week of the training programme next week.

For details phone Leigh Goldschmidt on 072 447 1600 or email move4health@ssisa.com



PICTURE: GARETH WHITE

■ Camps Bay's Sacha Specker in action at the Sport Unlimited Cape Classic over the weekend.

Camps Bay's Sacha on a wave of success

Camps Bay's Sacha Specker claimed victory in both the Pro and Drop Knee divisions at the Sport Unlimited Cape Classic, held over the weekend at various beaches around the Peninsula.

Specker, who has recently returned from Hawaii and Australia where he won a US Bodyboarding Association event in California took top honours at the event after performing complex manoeuvres during both of the respective finals.

In an action-packed Pro Division

final, Specker opened his account early with an opening ride, followed by numerous high scoring waves.

Specker faced tough competition from fellow Capetonians, Robert Starke, Vaughn Harris and Aden Kleeve in the Drop Knee Division. Specker and Starke were neck and neck for most of the final but Specker sealed victory with a move called the "Drop Knee Floater".

Starke placed second, with Kleeve finishing third and Harris fourth.

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