

THE SUN

Staying slim in the summer

Effort helps kids fight seasonal weight gain

By Jim Steinberg Staff Writer

The game is simple — run to the blackboard, put down one letter of the word for a vegetable or fruit, then race back to a teammate.

Boys squared off against girls on a hot afternoon recently in the air-conditioned Johnson Center on San Bernardino's Westside. For them, it wasn't just about competition — it was about health.

The spelling relay was part of the "Power Up Your Summer Challenge," sponsored by the Desert Sierra Health Network, a unit of the Network for a Healthy California. The effort is one of several designed to counter kids' weight gain during summer.

"For many students, summer break is also a break from healthy habits fostered in the structured school environment," said Pam-



Destiny Davis, 9, left, and Kayla Bonds, 7, play Will boxing last week at the Johnson Center in San Bernardino. Lefronzo Carter Staff Photographer

SUMMER

From Al
ela Sr., a coordinator for
Network for a Healthy Cali-

fornia.

"Instead of scheduled
meals and snacks, chil-

dren at home during sum-

mer break may have con-

tinuous access to
unhealthy snacks," she

said. "In place of recess,
time watching television

and playing video games,
It all adds up to more calo-

ries consumed and less
burned."

The Network for a
Healthy California repre-

sents a statewide move-

ment of partners working

toward improving the
health of low-income Cali-

fornians
through
increased fruit and vegeta-

ble consumption and daily
physical activity.

A national public-health
study in 2007 found that

three subgroups were espe-

cially at risk for weight
gains during the summer

vacation: black children,
Latinos children and chil-

dren who were already
overweight at the begin-

ning of kindergarten.
Childhood obesity rates
in the United States have
tripled over the last 20
years.

SUMMER

From Al
Bernardino County Housing
Authority complex.

On this afternoon, the girls

were completing the spelling of
words like "tomato," "water-

melon" and "carrot" faster than
the boys.

But both seemed equally
fleet-footed in the dash from a

staging area, which happened
to be a theatrical stage, to a

blackboard.
After 30 minutes, there was
little doubt calories were

burned.
"Weight gain in children is
quite common in the summer,"

said Dr. Warren R. Peters, direc-

tor of the Center for Health
Promotion at Loma Linda Uni-

versity.
"The sad story is that chil-

dren are only a reflection of
their parents. ... Sitting at the

beach does not burn a lot of
calories."

Since the beginning of the
Industrial Revolution, physical

work has been dropping out of
the equation for most families,

Peters said.
In an era when you use only
seven calories to collect 2,000

calories at a fast-food restau-

rant, exercise should be sched-

uled like all other appoint-

ments, he said.
Julie Mamford, a registered
dietician for the San Bernar-

dino County Department of
Public Health, said parents
should "keep healthy snacks
like strawberries, watermelon,
carrots and vegetables within
reach.

SUMMER

These are not only delicious
but are generally inexpensive
this time of year and a great
way to eat right when the mon-

ey's right."

"If kids can't get outside,
encourage active indoor play,"

Mamford said. "Even simple
things like turning on their

favorite music and dancing,
cherleading, playing freeze

and-seek
dance, limbo or hide-and-
can get them moving to avoid
the summer slump."

Jim Steinberg
jim.steinberg@inlandnnews.com
909-386-3855