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## Active against obesity

It seems reports are coming out every week about the obesity epidemic, and we at BCI Burke believe that encouraging physical fitness early helps kids begin healthy habits that will last into adulthood.

For example, adult obesity rates increased in 23 states and did not decrease in a single state in the past year, according to *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America 2009*, a [report](#) released by the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Excess weight and obesity contribute to many health issues, including heart disease, diabetes, and even several types of cancer. It's important to get kids engaged in physical activity as early as possible because children who are obese are more inclined to be obese adults.



The National Association for Sports and Physical Education recommends children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. The good news is that children don't necessarily have to get physical activity all at once, but can accumulate this time throughout the day. Several breaks that allow children to get up and move can be quite beneficial.

Also, play can be structured or unstructured. Unstructured activity allows children to choose what they want to do. Structured activity is organized and goal-oriented with children instructed as to their activities.

BCI Burke's fitness-oriented [Intensity® fitness play complex](#) caters to both structured and unstructured play. Children get valuable exercise as they go about their "free-play" on Intensity because the activities are designed to work important muscle groups and provide cardiovascular benefits. For more structured play, teachers and park supervisors can use the Intensity® Curriculum to help organize games and activities that help children get the most fitness benefits from Intensity.

## Burke representative leads by example

When BCI Burke representative Jay Robertson talks about the importance of overcoming physical challenges to achieve higher levels of fitness, he's not just repeating something he's read.

After Robertson punctured a lung in a 2003 accident, doctors told him that he might never race in another cycling event again. But on June 28, he finished first in the Masters 4/5 35+ category in the "Tour of America's Dairyland" race series.

The North Texas and Oklahoma rep drove more than 800 miles to Wisconsin to enter the tour which was held June 18-28.

"I heard about the race when I was at the Burke sales meeting in January. The tour had races all around southeastern Wisconsin including two races in Fond du Lac, the headquarters of BCI Burke. It was like I was racing for the home team,"



said Robertson, president of Child's Play Inc.

Although his initial goal was to finish in the top 10, he "upgraded" it quickly when he realized he had a chance of winning the entire event.

"After winning one race in Waterloo and both races in Fond du Lac, I realized that it was possible to win the whole event. During the last race, I was determined to win," he said.

Before the last race, Robertson was one point behind the leader. If he could beat him, he would win the event.

"We kept an eye on each other and jockeyed for position all afternoon. On the last lap, I pulled away and won by approximately three riders," said Robertson.

Robertson won prizes including a custom bike frame, a 30-pound wheel of cheese, cash, and the distinctive yellow and white cow print jersey.

## Attacking the obesity epidemic head-on

By Tim Ahern

In our decades-old debate over health care costs, we've rarely actually put a price tag on obesity, which I'm convinced is one of the biggest costs of all. But recently, the State of California did just that.

And the answer was grim. Obesity is costing California about \$41 billion a year -- twice as much as it did a mere six years ago, according to the state's Center for Public Health Advocacy. The California study, which includes indirect costs such as lost productivity, is one of a number that have appeared lately addressing different facets of our national obesity epidemic. And what's amazing about these studies is the extent to which they agree on the scope of the problem and the steps we need to take in order to address it.

The experts agree, for example, that lifelong patterns are established in early childhood, and overweight kids tend to grow into overweight adults.

But kids don't have to wait until they grow up to suffer the consequences of poor nutrition and inactivity. Obesity is creating serious health problems for kids at an alarming rate. One study found that between 1999 and 2005, the number of children from age two to 19 hospitalized with a primary or secondary diagnosis of obesity doubled. Researchers at Mount Sinai School of Medicine found the obesity-related hospitalizations rose by 8.8 percent a year for kids between ages two and five. (You can read about the study [here](#).)

As kids get older, the numbers get even worse. The number of obesity-related hospitalizations between 1999 and 2005 rose by:

- 10.4 percent for kids ages six to 11.
- 11.4 percent for kids ages 12 to 19.

The hospitalization costs are enormous, of course, and unlike many of our health problems, this is a cost we as a nation can



control. Study after study recommends that we take steps at the federal, state and local levels to promote a healthier diet and increase physical activity, especially among children.

In California's Cost of Obesity study, for example, the researches recommended:

- Community-based prevention programs that promote healthy eating and physical activity,
- More neighborhoods with safe and attractive playgrounds, parks and other places for recreational exercise, and
- Improved physical activity infrastructure.

I couldn't agree more. That's why we're putting more and more effort into improving our playgrounds. Our [Intensity® fitness play complex](#) continues to explode in popularity, and now we are taking steps to better integrate Intensity with activities from our other playground lines, creating playgrounds that encourage more and more intense physical activity.

And of course, it's important to set a good example. That's why I'm so proud of Burke representative Jay Robertson, who came all the way from Texas to compete in a series of bicycle races -- and win! You can read about him elsewhere in this issue as well.

It will take all of us working together, but I believe we can make a difference.

## Burke rep recognized for his service to the New Jersey Recreation and Parks Association

BCI Burke representative George Herberger believes playgrounds are an important part of a community. And as Burke's rep for playgrounds in New Jersey, he constantly seeks opportunities to serve.

That philosophy attracted the attention of the New Jersey Recreation and Parks Association (NJRPA), which recently named Herberger as one of the association's three recipients of the 2009 President's Service Award.

The award, selected and given by outgoing association President Bruce Kaufmann, recognizes people who go above and beyond to contribute to the promotion of parks and recreation and who actively promote the association, according to Kaufmann.

"It's the first time in recent memory that a commercial member has won the award. George has a tremendous insight into our association. He consistently looks out for the best interests of our members and the association," said Kaufmann.

Herberger is currently the commercial chair for the NJRPA and has been in the association for 18 years.

"The New Jersey Recreation and Parks Association has been good to my company over the years, and we continuously try to give back to the association. This year for example I've focused on getting more commercial members involved in the association as well as organizing the trade show," said Herberger, owner of Ben Shaffer and Associates, which represents BCI Burke products in central and north New Jersey.

In addition to being active in the NJRPA, George is an Associate Member of IPEMA, on the board of Downtown NJ, member & volunteer for NJ Association of Commercial Representatives, member of NJALSA, NJ Pool Managers Association, NJ Sports Field Managers Association and NJ Community Association Institute.



NJRPA Immediate Past President Bruce Kaufmann (left); BCI Burke Representative George Herberger (right)