

Team Work

Youth programs raise health awareness

By Randi Hicks Rowe

RECREATIONAL, NUTRITION AND diabetes prevention programs at Boys and Girls Clubs on reservations are improving health awareness, as well as attracting more young people to the clubs. These programs include NikeGO/SPARK and On the T.R.A.I.L. to Diabetes Prevention (Together Raising Awareness for Indian Life), a National Congress of American Indians, Indian Health Service, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Nike collaborative.

"In recruiting for T.R.A.I.L., we were able to bring in a younger group, and one of the clubs now averages 50 to 60 a day, ages 8 to 13," said Teresa Tate, diabetes coordinator for the Cherokee Nation, which has nine Boys and Girls Clubs. By starting the programs at a younger age, all the clubs can be more effective. Tate said that not only does it draw more and younger students, but it makes them "excited and ready to go" each day.

T.R.A.I.L. and NikeGO started at the Cherokee clubs last year. The NikeGO program includes 45 minutes of games, some of which were included in the Sports, Play & Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK) training that Tate received. The kids also participate in more traditional American Indian recreational activities, such as cultural games and stickball. In addition, kids in the club walk one mile each day as part of Notah Begay's Walk With Me program.

All of these programs fit into the clubs' mission to teach children to be active, Tate said. NikeGO continues year-round and is mandatory for all club participants. The T.R.A.I.L. program runs for three-months. The Cherokee clubs all ran their first T.R.A.I.L. programs

earlier this year, took a break for the summer and now are gearing up for the next one.

Tate has found one interesting way to combine the programs. After the first T.R.A.I.L. program ended, the club held a lock-in. At the lock-in, she and other adults asked the kids diabetes-related questions, which those who had



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participated in T.R.A.I.L. could easily answer. Prizes were equipment, such as sneakers, bats and balls, that Nike donated as part of the NikeGO program.

NikeGO is a signature program of Nike's U.S. Commercial Affairs Department and operates through after-school programs with a variety of populations, Indian and non-Indian. In Indian communities, it partners with IHS and FirstPic, a consulting firm in Maryland, which implements the T.R.A.I.L. program. The NikeGO outreach is in addition to Indian-specific programs that Nike offers through its Native American Program. Members of participating reservations travel to Nike's headquarters for training in com-

ponents of the program.

The program targets inactive kids, using Boys and Girls Clubs, for drop-in play. Its mission is to enable participants to "just enjoy playing with their friends," said Alicia Procello, NikeGO program manager. Activities are designed so that kids gain at least 30 minutes of active play each day, she said.

Procello said the experience of the Cherokee clubs is typical. Most clubs find that the program, especially when combined with T.R.A.I.L., does encourage better attendance and participation at the clubs. In addition to the Cherokee Nation, NikeGO currently is presented through the Northern Cheyenne Nation in Montana; The Navajo Nation in Arizona; the Oglala Sioux in South Dakota; and the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi.

T.R.A.I.L. has four themes: About Me and My Health, Diabetes and Nutrition, Making Smart Food Choices and Sharing Knowledge With Others. It weaves self-esteem and prevention activities, drawing from tribal traditions

and history, to teach about nutrition and food choices and their impact on diabetes.

The program plans to triple its club sites this year. All sites will receive NikeGO product grants, a pass-through grant from NCAAI to fund it for one year and a curriculum, training and ongoing technical assistance.

In the Cherokee Nation, the young people are taking knowledge from the T.R.A.I.L. program home to their families — reminding their parents, for example, that nutrition and activity can play a role in controlling diabetes.

"Many didn't realize that diabetes [can] be controlled," Tate said.

Before the program started, the young people just had come to accept that if your grandfather had diabetes and lost his toe, that you would have diabetes and lose a toe, and nothing could be done to change that. Once the youngsters realized that they could affect this cycle, they became more engaged in the program.

Receiving the equipment from Nike was an inspiration and a help in gaining equipment from other programs, said Tate. The Cherokee received some golf equipment through working with Begay, and the Cherokee Enterprise is now taking club members to a golf course for a clinic periodically. □