**PROOF OF THE PUDDING: What Have We Done With Our Feet and Forks?**

**Community Coalition for Children…helping children thrive® SPRING LUNCHEON**

**Tuesday, April 22, 2014**

The focus of this event was to share our successes and obstacles in applying the messages from our October 2013 programs with Dr. David Katz: *Feet + Forks = Healthy Kids + Healthy Community* and *Food Forensics*. Thanks to our gracious host, the Mohegan Tribe, we were treated to a lovely, healthy luncheon in an elegant room just the right size for our group of members and guests. Committee members included Scott Sjoquist, Lisa Lahti, Sue Corrice, Cathy Bokoff, Charlene Haukoum, and Cara Westcott. During our lunch, we presented long-time member, Darbee Percival, with a farewell gift – a silver bracelet of starfish which resembled the kite in our CCC logo. Her service as grant writer and data collector, treasurer, and professional luncheon chair has been remarkable “glue” for our organization.

The highlight of the luncheon was the opportunity to hear from three speakers:

**Dr. Deborah Kennedy,** from Build Healthy Kids Initiative (a protégé of Dr. Katz at Yale who worked on the NuVal system with him), puts out a monthly newsletter which 160,000 kids receive. The March 2013 newsletter, focused on limiting sweet drinks, resulted in such backlash from industry that Senator Blumenthal intervened to protect her!

Her data-filled presentation focused on Monster Drinks – Monster Energy. “There is no official definition of ‘energy drinks’ – as a ‘supplement,’ they are unregulated. ‘Beverages’ don’t have to list how much caffeine they contain and there is no limit on the caffeine in ‘beverages.’ ‘Beverages’ don’t have to report if someone dies” [from drinking their product]. “Males 13 – 35 are the target population. The cans typically have no way to seal once opened, so the tendency is to drink too much. The caffeine in energy drinks is synthetic and stays in the system longer than caffeine from coffee beans.”

“Little kids shouldn’t even drink a Mountain Dew – too much caffeine. Energy drinks can cause anxiety disorders and mix negatively with medications for ADHD, antibiotics, asthma, diabetes, etc.” Dr. Kennedy is working on prohibiting the sale of “energy drinks” in CT to people under 18.

**Kiesha Henry,** from the Connecticut College Office of Volunteer Community Services, who had spoken out at Dr. Katz’s session with the students in the fall, fleshed out her successful change in lifestyle. Several years ago, she weighed 300 lbs., was diabetic, on numerous medications, wearing size 26 clothes, and experiencing “fuzzy thinking.” She realized that unless she made a significant positive change, she would not live to play with the grandchildren she adores. Now a size 10, she strives to be a role model for her granddaughter who lives at her house (in spite of the fact that her own children prefer unhealthy foods).

She remarked that positive changes in the environment are helping: food stamps now cover fresh vegetables and more folks are receiving fresh vegetables through community garden/food bank provisions. Also, schools now preclude students from bringing soda and salty snacks. Some of her strategies with her kids and grandkids are “even if food looks funny, taste, and then if they don’t like it, they don’t need to eat more – often they discover they like the taste.” She recommends eating slower – it takes 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that it’s full. “Junk is so bad for asthmatics…people are dying earlier and earlier because of their eating choices.” Her focus now is “not so much on weight, more on energy, healthy habits, and thinking clearly.” What a role model she is!

**Cathy Terrall,** Director, Subase Youth Center, described what the Navy has been doing about our “feet and forks.” Subase is one of two installations in CONUS (continental US) to receive funding for a “Healthy Base Initiative.” (It is one of 13 worldwide.) In FY 2013, the Subase Youth Center served 1045 children ages 6 weeks – 18 years. She described the “FOUR PRONGS” of the initiative as nutrition, physical activity, weight reduction, and tobacco cessation. The FEET include a Navy-wide fitness curriculum for kids with such simple activities as a neighborhood walk, the hiking club (which also includes parents going to Bluff Point and other State parks), and the use of the ropes wall at the base. The FORKS segment includes: healthy center snack bar selection; they serve healthy menus for their breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack meals; kids have planted vegetables and herbs at the center and the kids will run a farmers market to sell what they and the CDC grow; kayaking club is a new initiative; and their tobacco cessation thrust is via a grant from the Boys & Girls Club. She very much attributed the launching of these programs to Dr. Katz’s programs.

In the discussion that followed the three presenters, Dr. Kennedy commented that both the Youth Program and sailors would benefit from her work on Monster Energy Drinks. Loren Sterman noted that the brain keeps growing until age 25, so our young sailors at Submarine School and aboard subs in the area are still very vulnerable to cognitive damage from caffeine, etc. Linkages were forged between Dr. Kennedy and Subase for future collaboration.

\*An additional initiative at Subase was announced July 31, 2014 in *The Dolphin* newspaper: to train volunteers for the Cooking Matters at the Store program in the Subase Commissary. The thrust is that tour leaders “will empower families to stretch their food budgets so they and their families get healthy meals at home. Tours can accommodate 6 – 12 participants and last approximately 45-60 minutes. Tour leaders ensure shoppers gain insight into identifying healthy foods, such as whole grains; reading nutrition labels; and buying produce and other healthy items economically…At the end of the tour, participants are given a $10 challenge: to create a meal using the five food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy) to feed a family of four for $10.” Then, they are not charged for $10 worth of the healthy foods they select.

**Further proof of the pudding: two newspaper articles appeared as a result!**

**Norwich Bulletin – Elizabeth Ryan, reporter** – article focused on speakers’ messages and on the inclusion of a representative from a Plainfield group formed to build a playground.

**The Day – Deborah Straszheim, reporter** – July 9, 2014 article focused on Darell Hammond’s upcoming 2014 presentations, plus history of the organization since formation in 1996. \*\*Of note, this summer the news has been full of reports about parents leaving youngsters alone in overheated cars, both nationally and regionally – the parallel to Darell Hammond’s call-to-action experience is painful.

Respectfully submitted, Kathleen O’Beirne 8/7/14 – revised 8/12/14