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Parent Group Works to Promote Drinking Water over Sugary Drinks for Children
“Choose Water” campaign helps parents in the fight against obesity and type 2 diabetes

LOS ANGELES – California leads the country in childhood obesity and persistent risk factors for serious health problems in young children. Since one of the leading causes of weight-related health risks is sugary drinks, Robert F. Kennedy Institute of Community and Family Medicine’s (RFKI) Choose Health LA Kids parent collaborative is working to create healthier communities in the Harbor South Bay area.

“Parents want to see a change in Harbor South Bay by making simple modifications such as including healthier food choices and the option of smaller portion sizes to restaurant menus. We are also advocating for the addition of water and milk to the beverage menu, to encourage residents to supplement their food selection with a drink that is low in sugar or does not contain any sugar. To take it one step further, the parent collaborative is also working to promote healthy or neutral food messages on billboard advertisements—which often influence our children—as opposed unhealthy fast-food and sugary drink messages that are currently being displayed” said Dominga Pardo, Director. “With the support of the community we are confident we can prevent obesity and other health conditions in our children and we invite community members to join our efforts.”

“Water: The Healthiest Choice” is a campaign launched by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. It is aimed at parents and focuses on providing simple, straightforward information about soda, sports and juice drinks and their link to obesity and type 2 diabetes. The multilingual media campaign encourages parents to give their children water and remove sugary drinks from their diet.

Parents can pick up a brochure with tips on how to make water more appealing for their family. For the children, there is a coloring sheet that encourages them to choose water and make water more delicious by adding fresh fruit. Brochures and coloring sheet are available for free at the RFKI location at 544 N. Avalon Blvd., Wilmington, CA 90744.

A recent national study found that while California’s obesity rate among adults is the fifth lowest in the country and there has been an overall decline in childhood obesity rates, the Golden State still has the highest obesity rate among children between the ages of 2 and 4. Sugary drinks, which can represent up to 40% of a child’s total calorie intake, are a leading cause of obesity among children.

“We want to encourage parents to choose the sugar free, calorie free, and obesity free drink for their children – water,” said Dr. Paul Simon, MD, MPH, Director, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “There are many simple ways to make water more appealing to kids. Parents can go to ChooseHealthLA.com for tips and easy recipes.”

The parent group, implemented by RFKI, is one of numerous Choose Health LA Kids Parent Collaboratives in Los Angeles County. Choose Health LA Kids is a countywide early childhood obesity prevention initiative of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health which is funded by First 5 LA.

To learn more about the parent collaborative and other efforts, visit the RFKI Program website at <http://rfki.org/>.