

## Time to start getting in shape

Originally published in:

**The Herald-Sun**

Friday, June 02, 2006

Edition: Final

Page: C1

JOHN MCCANN Columnist

The exercise was called the "washing machine," and the P.E. teacher at Vandora Springs Elementary School in Garner, who showed us how to do it, was Ms. Midgette: Hands on hips, bend to the front, to the right, lean back, and to the left. Repeat several times until nice and loose and ready to play dodgeball or kickball or something like that.

Granted, there still were fat kids in class, but not like there are now.

I grew up when a trip to McDonald's was a treat, because home-cooked meals were the norm. Kids these days must see Big Macs as one of the major food groups, and super-sized portions as appetizers.

By way of full disclosure, the Rustler jeans my mama bought me from Kmart were in the size category called husky, so it's not like I was the picture of prepubescent health.

Sure I was a little chunky, and I wasn't even a couch potato in the house all day playing video games. Meaning today's sedentary young'uns are at greater risk due to the allure of Xboxes, online gaming, DVD players -- a little break for some fast food -- and back to the easy chairs for more technological bondage.

Certified strength and conditioning specialist Maylene Jackson is sprinting to change that. When she found out her kids were only getting an hour per week of physical education at their Wake County school, and after noticing just how unhealthy so many children are, she started a nonprofit organization called Kids in Training (KIT).

Essentially, KIT's about getting kids moving and eating better. Jackson does that through events like the Da-kit-alon at 3 p.m. Saturday at Pearis Elementary School. The cost is \$25 and there's still time to sign up. Call Jackson at (919) 372-7032, or visit [www.kidsintraining.com](http://www.kidsintraining.com).

Politicians have lobbied for color-coded vending machines to help kids make wiser munching choices. Administrators in Durham have pushed for the outright removal of snack and soda machines in the schools.

Which is good, and part of KIT's mission is kids' nutrition.

But young people have to get moving.

When students make poor grades, some parents blame the teachers. Naturally, when kids started getting fatter, moms and dads did the same thing, talking about Ms. So-and-So needing to get off her butt and take the kids outside.

Jackson was one of those parents until she stopped making excuses and got active about getting kids active.

"Kids don't go out and play anymore," Jackson said.

Too many sexual predators out there, too much violence. And even in rather idyllic settings, parents still have to convince kids to pull away from modern technology in order to get some sun.

"We can't compete [with that]," Jackson said.

So parents have to lead by example when it comes to fitness -- that goes for time-crunched and fiscally challenged single parents, too.

"That's me. I'm a single parent," Jackson said. "I understand that an apple costs 50 cents and an orange costs a dollar, but there are certain things we have to make a priority."

If you can't afford fresh fruits and vegetables, then frozen broccoli and canned peaches in their own juice are just as healthy, Jackson said. As well, she experimented and discovered that a homemade lunch of turkey on wheat, carrots, an apple and skim milk purchased at school is cheaper than cafeteria food and those prepackaged meals in the cute cardboard and plastic.

See, what we're talking about is helping children avoid the fat jokes, and preventing health problems later on.

John McCann's column appears Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Contact him at [jmccann@heraldsun.com](mailto:jmccann@heraldsun.com) or 419-6601.

**© Copyright by The Durham Herald Company. Original copyright 2006. Copyright renewed 2007. All rights reserved. All material on [heraldsun.com](http://heraldsun.com) is protected by U.S. and international copyright laws and may not be reproduced or redistributed in any medium except as provided in the site's Terms of Use.**