

Let's Go!

It's Working

Greater Portland Demonstration Project



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Thank you to our many partners for your generous contributions and work in keeping our communities healthy!

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Thank you to our communities for coming together to create healthy places and healthy people.

Cape Elizabeth • Cumberland • Falmouth • Freeport • Gorham • North Yarmouth • Portland • Scarborough
South Portland • Westbrook • Windham • Yarmouth

It's Working!



Let's Go! is a nationally recognized childhood obesity prevention program based in Maine. We focus on creating healthy places to help children and families eat healthy and be active. We work in six different settings to reach families where they live, study, work and play to reinforce the importance of healthy living. The 5-2-1-0 message (5 or more fruits and vegetables, 2 hours or less of recreational screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity and 0 sugary drinks, more water and low fat milk a day) is used across the settings to remind families of these recommendations for healthy eating and active living.

The effort began in 2006 when seven of Maine's most prominent healthcare, community, and corporate leaders came together to create the unique program to combat the growing problem of childhood obesity. The project was convened by United Way of Greater Portland and implemented in partnership with Maine Medical Center and MaineHealth. The plan was to begin with a five year, multi-setting demonstration project in 12 communities of Greater Portland and then use the results to spread the model throughout Maine.

It worked! *Let's Go!* now has 18 dissemination partners throughout the state, with others continuing to join. In 2011, with the statewide expansion underway, *Let's Go!* transitioned to a program of The Kids CO-OP at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center. It continues to be implemented in partnership with MaineHealth, Eastern Maine Health Systems, United Way of Greater Portland, and the Healthy Maine Partnerships throughout the state.

Through this report, you'll learn how the program achieved these goals in the various settings. All of this was made possible by our participating member programs and through the generous support of our partners and funders. Thank you all for an exciting first five years, and I'm looking forward to all we can achieve in the next five years.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tory".

Tory Rogers, MD
Director, *Let's Go!*

The goals of the demonstration project were to:

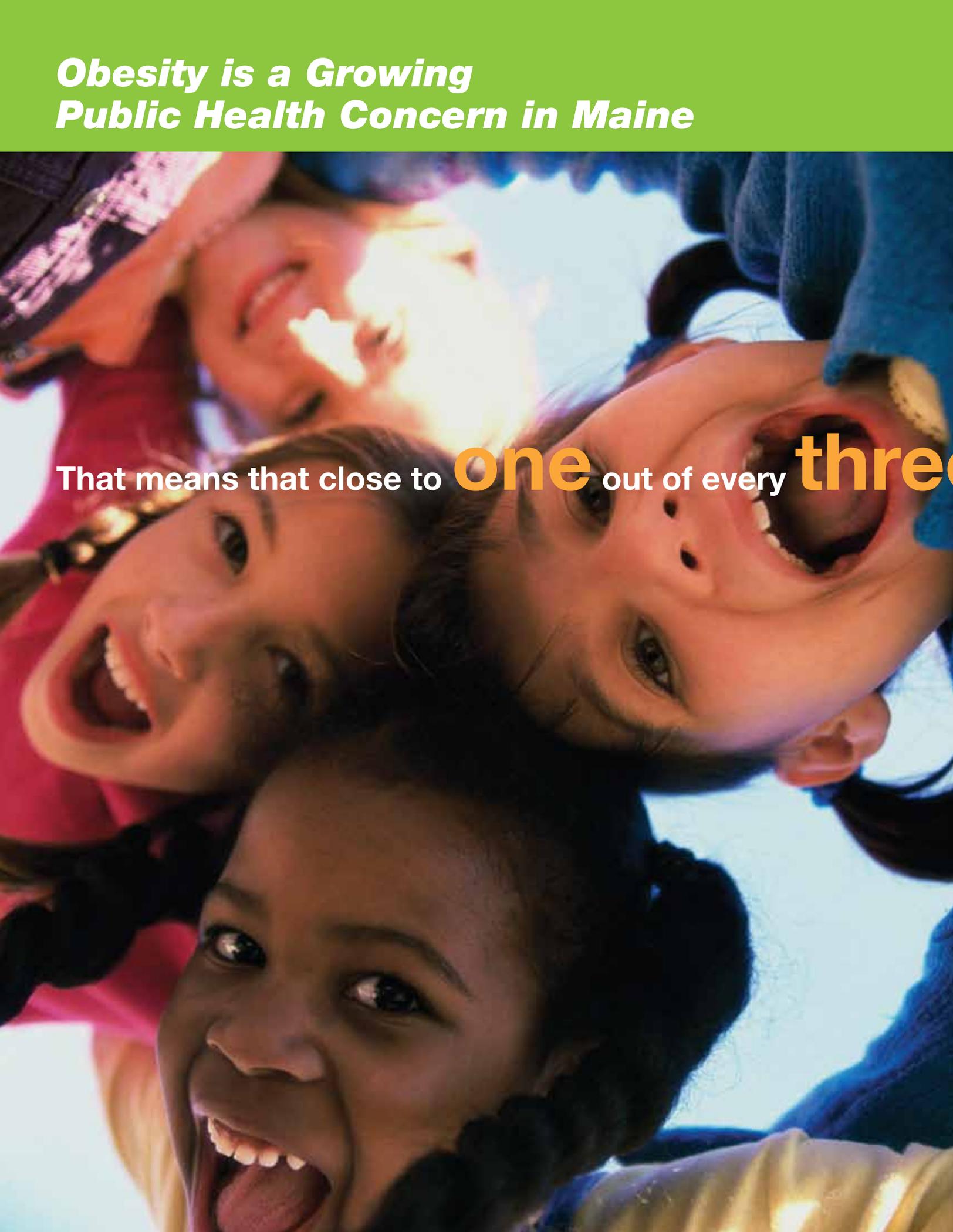
- Increase the proportion of youth, ages 0 to 18, at a healthy weight,
- Change policy and environments to support healthy eating and active living,
- Evaluate the interventions to make mid-course improvements and learn from experiences,
- Create a model that can be replicated in other parts of Maine and nationally, and
- Assure sustainability of results.



Tory Rogers, MD
Director, *Let's Go!*

Obesity is a Growing Public Health Concern in Maine

That means that close to **one** out of every **three**

A close-up, low-angle shot of several children of diverse ethnicities laughing heartily. They are looking upwards, and their faces are filled with joy. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting. The children's hair is styled in various ways, including braids and ponytails. The overall mood is positive and energetic.

The Greater Portland region and Cumberland County, like the state of Maine and the U.S., suffers from an epidemic of obesity.

In 2005, more than 60% of all adults in Maine reported being either overweight or obese,¹ up from 45% in 1990. The problem, however, is not limited to adults; a large proportion of Maine's children are also not at a healthy weight. In 2005, 36% of kindergarten students,² 26% of 6-8 graders and 29% of 9-12 grade youth reported being overweight or at-risk for overweight.³

e school-age students in Maine is carrying **extra weight.**

- **Overweight children are more likely than their healthy weight peers to become overweight or obese adults, facing increased risks for many chronic health problems.**
- **Carrying extra weight during childhood can lead to risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, social and psychological problems, and poor self-esteem⁴.**

Like some other chronic health conditions, with focus and effort, obesity can be reduced and even prevented. Being overweight is a result of a calorie imbalance, genetics and one's environment that can be impacted through healthy eating and increased physical activity.⁴ By maintaining a healthy weight, youth increase their chances of living healthier lives. Moreover, studies show that taking simple steps such as increasing daily physical activity can have positive impacts on school performance, including academic achievement, and behaviors such as staying on task, concentration and attentiveness in the classroom.⁵

¹ *Maine Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2005.*

² *Maine Child Health Survey, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, 2005.*

³ *Maine Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Maine Department of Education, 2005.*

⁴ *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy Youth! website, <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/overweight/index.htm#1>, accessed April 5, 2007.*

⁵ *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010.*

What is Let's Go!?

Let's Go! Promotes Healthy Places and Healthy People in Communities

Let's Go! reaches children and families where they live, learn, work and play with a consistent message that promotes four healthy behaviors — 5-2-1-0. These four behaviors are based in science and recommended by the medical community to promote good health.



Let's Go! learned and evolved over the years and thus developed an effective model that includes work in six different settings: schools, early childhood programs, after school programs, health-care offices, workplaces and communities. *Let's Go!* encourages local champions in each setting to implement *Let's Go!*'s "10 Strategies for Success" to create supportive environments and policies to help children and families meet the 5-2-1-0 recommendations. The program is based on the premise that if families are exposed to health promotion messages through several settings, and if those settings have policies and environments that support healthy choices, they will be more likely to adopt or maintain the behaviors in their daily lives. In addition to being active in the six settings, *Let's Go!* shared its messages more broadly on television, radio, buses, movie theaters, signs, and other places throughout the community.

This model for change is centered on three core principles:

- **Changing environments and policies are the keys to creating healthy places that support healthy choices**
- **Consistent messaging across sectors is essential**
- **Strategies are based on science and recommended by the medical community**

10 Strategies for Success

-  **1. Provide healthy choices for snacks and celebrations; limit unhealthy choices.**
- Encourage parents to provide only health options
 - Have non-food celebrations

- 2. Participate in local, state, and national initiatives that promote healthy eating and active living.**
- *Local:* Local gardening programs, Buy Local initiatives
 - *State:* Take Time, WinterKids, Walk and Bike to School Day
 - *National:* National Nutrition Month, NAP SACC, Screen-Free Week, Safe Routes to School

- 3. Engage community partners to help support and promote healthy eating and active living at your site.**
- Doctors, dentists, dieticians, local colleges, food banks, libraries, farmers, and local community coalitions like Healthy Maine Partnerships

- 4. Partner with and educate families in adopting and maintaining a lifestyle that supports health eating and active living.**
- Distribute *Let's Go!* parent handouts
 - Sponsor family education events
 - Introduce *Let's Go!* at parent/teacher conferences and kindergarten orientation

-  **5. Provide water and low fat milk; limit or eliminate sugary beverages.**
- Allow easy access to free water via water fountains and/or water jugs
 - Allow water bottles
 - Create sugar bottle displays
 - Put limits on 100% juice

-  **6. Provide non-food rewards.**
- Use physical activity as a reward
 - Incorporate physical activity into learning

-  **7. Provide opportunities for children to get physical activity every day.**
Children should get one hour or more of physical activity every day. Help children achieve this goal.
- Use physical activity as a reward
 - Incorporate physical activity into learning
 - Provide open gym time
 - Keep inside recess active

- 8. Implement a staff wellness program that includes healthy eating and active living.**
- Support healthy staff celebrations
 - Encourage walking meetings
 - Allow for physical activity breaks throughout the day
 - Encourage staff to participate in physical activity with the children...no standing on the sidelines!

-  **9. Collaborate with food and nutrition programs to offer healthy food and beverage options.**
- Make your school nutrition director part of your *Let's Go!* team
 - Partner with the Child and Adult Care Food Program

-  **10. Limit recreational screen time. Children should limit recreational screen time to two hours or less a day. Help children achieve this goal.**
- Work with parents to reduce screen time at home
 - Find active alternatives to indoor recess
 - Promote National Screen-Free Week
 - Provide activity bags that can encourage screen-free evenings

Innovation in Action: Let's Go! Blends Science and Community Creativity

Throughout the five years, *Let's Go!* has received widespread recognition for its innovative approach. Building on the lessons learned from the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative⁶ that originally employed the 5-2-1-0 messaging in a clinical improvement program in 2004-2009, *Let's Go!* wove in promising practices from other childhood obesity programs, as well as partner knowledge of community outreach and marketing, to develop the overall model.

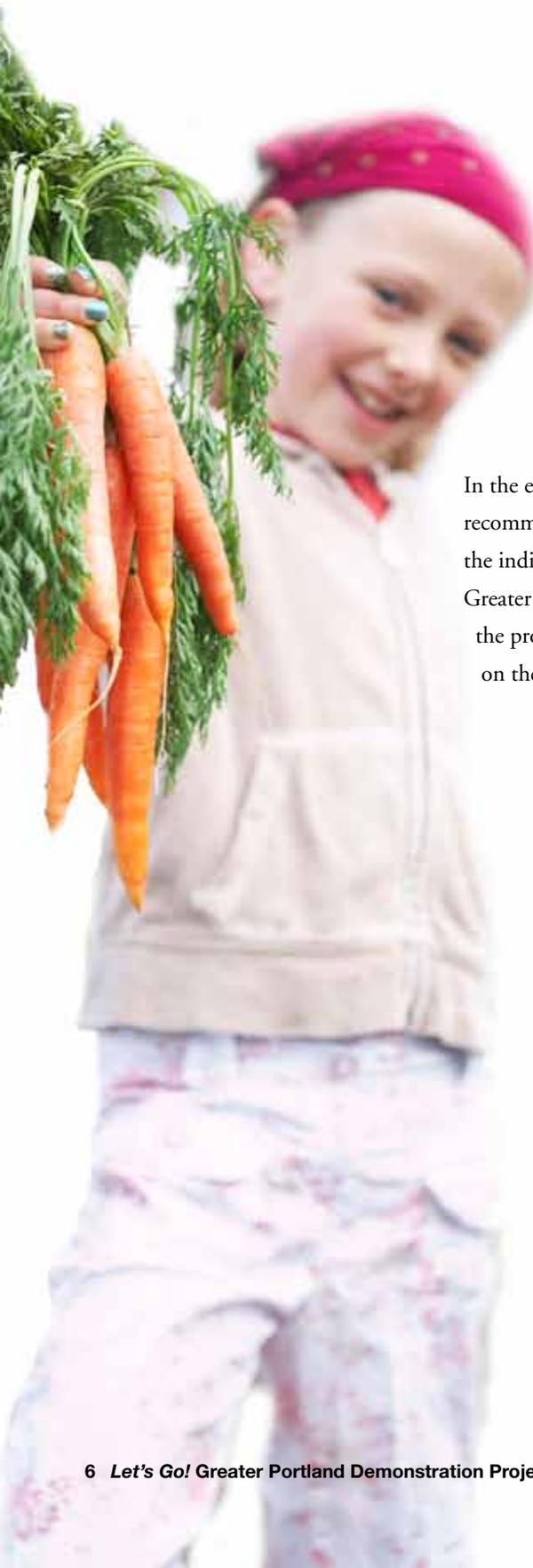
The program identified the key strategies and messages based in science and then developed a comprehensive set of outreach and reference materials to guide implementation including toolkits, a website, a *Let's Go!* 5-2-1-0 poster, and more. The *Let's Go!* staff enlisted local partners and provided tools and technical assistance to get them started.

In the early stages, the local partners decided what they wanted to do to meet the 5-2-1-0 recommendations and *Let's Go!* staff supported them in their work. After evaluating progress of all the individual efforts, *Let's Go!* began to steer partners to work on the 10 *Let's Go!* strategies so the Greater Portland community would benefit from working toward the same goals. By the fifth year, the program enjoyed wide participation in the region, with partners from every setting working on the recommended strategies to create healthy places and support healthy living.

As of June 2011, Let's Go! had engaged many partners in the 12 Greater Portland communities:

- **56 schools educating more than 23,000 students**
- **8 district school nutrition programs, serving over 20,000 students**
- **34 child care programs caring for over 1,400 children**
- **28 after school recreation programs serving over 1,800 youth**
- **29 healthcare sites**
- **7 of Greater Portland's largest employers**
- **15 community mini-grant projects**

⁶ *Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative was initially a program of the Maine Center for Public Health, the Maine-Harvard Prevention Research Center and the Maine American Academy of Pediatrics.*



Today, the program is well established throughout Greater Portland, with strong recognition and continued growth and involvement from the local partners in the key settings. In addition, as interest grew throughout Maine, *Let's Go!* created a formal model to disseminate the work through regional partners. Now there are 18 regions that have adopted the *Let's Go!* model with local partners working in a number of the *Let's Go!* settings. These new partners cover 461 towns and cities with 1.2 million Maine residents spanning from York County to Aroostook County. New partners also include all five of Maine's Native American tribes. As one partner shared in an evaluation survey, "The word is out!"

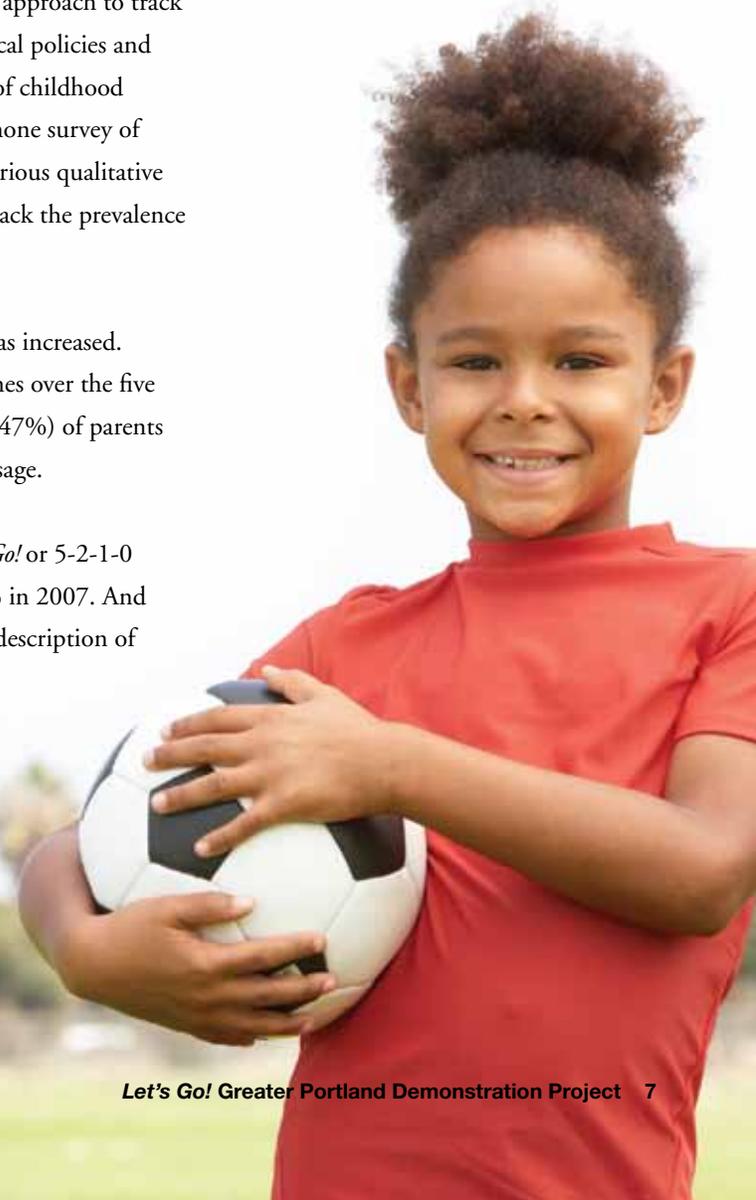
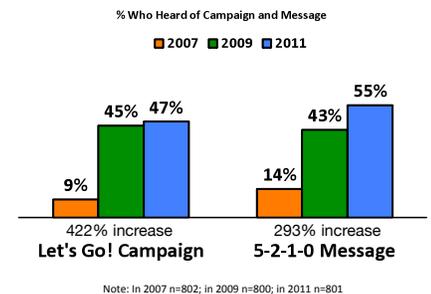
***Let's Go!* is seeing increases in awareness and knowledge of 5-2-1-0 and improved healthy behaviors among families and children in Greater Portland.**

Let's Go! has been measuring the progress and impact of the five-year demonstration project since it began. The findings from the evaluation have been used to shape the program and help spread the work to other regions. The evaluation uses a multi-pronged approach to track changes in awareness and knowledge of the messages, implementation of local policies and environmental changes, behavioral changes, and changes in the prevalence of childhood obesity. Data collection employed a variety of tools such as a periodic telephone survey of parents, surveys to track implementation of the strategies in each setting, various qualitative methods to understand partner experiences, and a clinical chart review to track the prevalence of obesity among children.

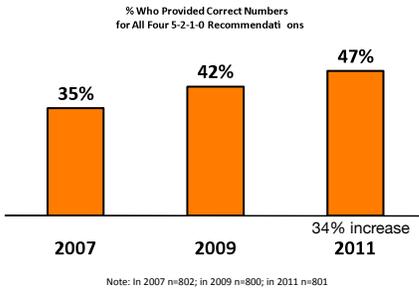
Awareness and knowledge of the *Let's Go!* effort and the 5-2-1-0 messages has increased. The results of a telephone survey conducted with parents three different times over the five years show progress in Greater Portland. After five years, close to one-half (47%) of parents are aware of *Let's Go!* and over one-half (55%) are aware of the 5-2-1-0 message.

Moreover, in 2011 a greater percentage of parents who were aware of *Let's Go!* or 5-2-1-0 reported a "very positive" reaction towards *Let's Go!*, 65% compared to 22% in 2007. And in 2011, 74% of all parents had a very positive reaction when they heard a description of the program.

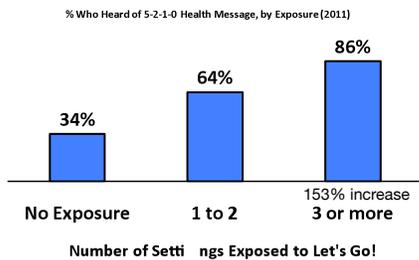
Parents' Awareness Increased Significantly from 2007 to 2011



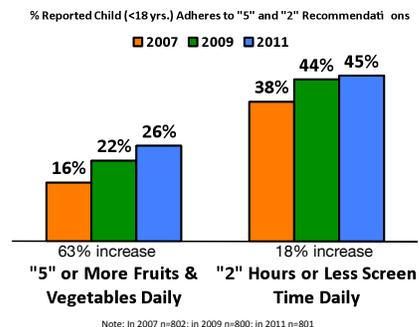
More Parents correctly identified all four 5-2-1-0 recommendations



Exposure to *Let's Go!* in multiple settings increased parents' awareness of 5-2-1-0



Child's adherence with "5" and "2" Behaviors increased significantly from 2007 to 2011



Parents Gaining Knowledge of 5-2-1-0 Recommendations

More parents can correctly state the individual recommendations for healthy living. The telephone survey findings reveal an increase in parent knowledge of all four 5-2-1-0 recommendations from 35% in 2007 to 47% 2011. Specifically, more parents are correctly stating the recommendation for "5" fruits and vegetables daily, 60% in 2011 compared to 53% in 2007. More parents also know the recommended "0" sugary drinks, 78% in 2011 compared to 64% in 2007. Knowledge of the "2" hour limit on screen time (94% of parents) and "1" hour of physical activity (97% of parents) remained high over the years.

Consistent 5-2-1-0 messaging in multiple settings is making a difference in awareness and knowledge levels.

Parents reporting exposure to *Let's Go!* in three or more settings were more likely to correctly state the individual 5-2-1-0 recommendations than those with less exposure. Fifty-nine percent of those with three or more exposures stated the recommendations correctly compared to 39% with no exposures. Moreover, 86% of those exposed in three or more settings are aware of the 5-2-1-0 message compared to 34% reporting no exposure to *Let's Go!*. These survey findings confirm the impact of the consistent messaging in multiple settings.

Parents report an improvement in their child's health behaviors and even greater improvement when they have been exposed to *Let's Go!* in multiple places.

The surveys show a greater proportion of children are meeting the "5" recommendation, 26% in 2011 compared to 16% in 2007. In addition, more children are limiting their recreational screen time, 45% in 2011 compared to 38% in 2007. For those parents reporting multiple exposures to *Let's Go!* messages, a greater percentage report their children are meeting the "1" recommendation for physical activity, 54% for no exposure compared to 63% with exposure in 3 or more settings. The findings verify the difference in behaviors when exposed to the messages in multiple places.

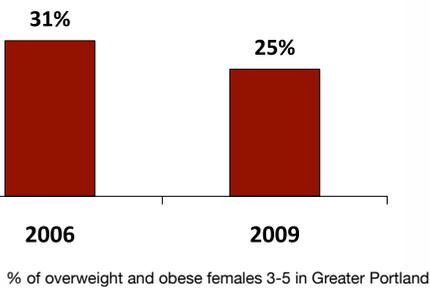
Overall, parents reported that 31% of children met at least three of the four recommendations in 2011. While the five year findings are encouraging, there is still more work to be done to have all children adopt the four healthy habits.

Early Measures of Childhood Obesity Prevalence in Greater Portland Show that the Growth in Obesity May be Slowing

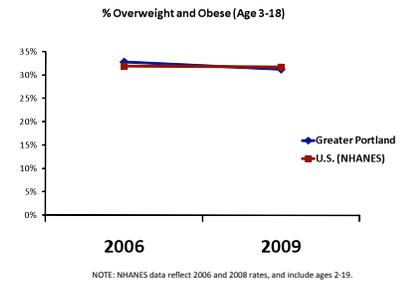
A review of patient charts for height and weight showed that the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children decreased from 33% in 2006 to 31% in 2009, however the difference was not statistically significant. Compared to national data collected through the NHANES, the change in obesity prevalence from 2006 to 2009 declined more steeply in the Greater Portland *Let's Go!* communities.

There was, however, a statistically significant difference among females, 3-5 years of age. A smaller proportion of 3-5 year old females were overweight and obese in 2009 compared to 2006 (25% vs. 31%). The next and final measure will review charts in 2013.

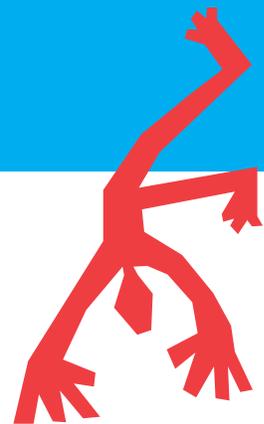
Overweight and obesity prevalence decreased for females age 3-5 in Greater Portland



Overweight and obesity prevalence for ages 3-18 in Greater Portland trended down, while U.S. remained the same.



Community



“5-2-1-0 is applicable to a diverse cultural population as well. I think with the increased education people understand that healthy eating is important, that exercise is important, and that not watching too much TV is important.”

Peter Burke, Parent, Portland

Communities are at the core of the *Let's Go!* model. *Let's Go!* is most effective when communities work across multiple settings to create places that support healthy living. When the simple 5-2-1-0 message surrounds family members in the community where they live, work, study and play, it reinforces the importance of the message and makes it easier to eat healthy and be more active. At the onset, the vision for *Let's Go!* and its Founding Partners was to enlist each of the 12 towns and cities in Greater Portland to individually adopt the approach. As the demonstration project unfolded, it became clear that the community setting that influences families does not neatly follow municipal boundaries, school districts or healthcare service areas. During the five year project, the idea of community evolved from the individual town focus to encompass the Greater Portland region as the area that influences families and children in their daily lives. This broader region wrapped in the partners from the six settings including school districts, workplaces, early childhood centers, after school programs and healthcare practices.

Most importantly, *Let's Go!* fosters a sense of community in the way it is implemented. The program welcomes all interested people from the six settings and, in turn, provides guidelines that support creativity and local initiative. *Let's Go!* provides tools, assistance, and occasional mini-grants to help partners build on local momentum to create healthy places across settings. The only requirement is that partners report back on their progress.

Let's Go! provided mini-grant funding to support several projects in the local communities over the five years to increase opportunities for healthy eating and activity and to understand local needs. Projects were varied in location and description, but each either increased awareness or improved the physical environment to support healthy choices.

The projects included:

- Improved trails, creation of maps, added signage to increase use of biking, hiking and skiing trails throughout the region
- Introduced healthy snacks and ideas for increased movement in a recreation center and a teen drop-in center
- Purchased new cooking equipment and playground equipment at three early childhood centers
- Sponsored a cultural dancing program for children from, or whose families are from, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. The program included healthy snacks at trainings
- Introduced snowshoes and winter activities program to elementary students
- Worked with a church to create “5-2-1-0 Goes to Church”

Schools

5-2-1-0 Goes to School started as a pilot project in nine schools in York County in 2006 to learn how the 5-2-1-0 message could be incorporated into the school day. The early experience showed that the message not only resonated with kids, teachers, and principals, but more importantly, it revealed the strong positive influence of connecting settings with the same message — in schools, doctor's offices and after school sites. Over the past five years, 5-2-1-0 Goes to School blossomed into a more robust program. It built more structure into the program by focusing on the 10 *Let's Go!* Strategies for Success and it emphasized that when children eat nutritious foods and are physically active on a regular basis, they become better learners. Through use of the 5-2-1-0 Goes to School framework, schools, teachers, nutrition programs and parents are creating healthier school environments.

Schools have a unique set of challenges when it comes to creating places that support healthy people. With limited hours in a school day, tight budgets and focus on core educational standards, it can be difficult to introduce new opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. Early on, 5-2-1-0 Goes to School and *Let's Go!* addressed these challenges by working with school leaders (school health coordinators, principals, superintendents and the Coordinated School Health Program at the Maine Department of Education) to show them no-cost and low-cost ways to incorporate 5-2-1-0 into existing activities in the schools. Through this partnership, *Let's Go!* continues to demonstrate that schools can be leaders for culture change in a community.

5-2-1-0 in Action in Schools

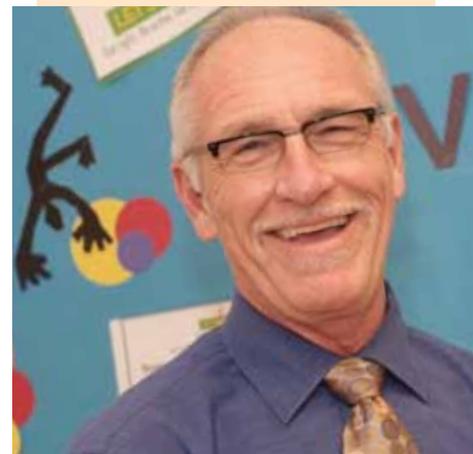
By 2011, all participating elementary schools were implementing the *Let's Go!* strategies in at least some classrooms with many implementing at least three strategies in most classrooms or school wide.

Examples of 5-2-1-0 in action include:

- An elementary school created a physical activity room equipped with various pieces of workout equipment including a Wii. Now it rewards students with time to use this inviting new space.
- A school nutrition director worked with elementary school students to plant a garden to grow produce for the school lunch program. The team worked closely with the library and classroom teachers to incorporate gardening and nutrition in school lessons.
- Several schools mapped walking trails around the property and used a variety of reward programs to track how far students walk. In distance tracked, students walked Mt. Katahdin, the state of Maine and across the U.S.
- *Let's Go!* strategies were incorporated into numerous school handbooks and district wellness policies.

Making Progress

- In every school district in the 12 towns
- Reaching 23,000 students
- In 56 schools out of 70 schools in the region



“Being a part of *Let's Go!* has made a difference for our entire staff. People are much more conscious of daily exercise, better eating habits, better choices for classroom celebrations. Teachers send lots of information home to parents via email about healthy nutrition. It really encourages the healthy lifestyle that many of us try to live!”

John Flaherty, Principal

Falmouth Elementary School

Putting the pieces together in

School Nutrition



About the Greater Portland School
Nutrition Director's Workgroup:

**"We worked on the Healthier US
School Challenge together.
I believe many of us would not
have completed it if it hadn't been
for the support and the vision that
we received from Let's Go!"**

Judith L. Goodenow, School Nutrition
Director, Regional School Unit #5

Let's Go! engaged school nutrition directors as partners in the fight against childhood obesity right from the beginning. Most children get one, and sometimes two, of their daily meals at school, making school nutrition programs an ideal place to focus on healthy eating. Eleven brave school nutrition directors, three from outside the Greater Portland region, responded to the call to action and joined the *Let's Go!* school nutrition directors workgroup. The goal of the workgroup was to understand the challenges of serving kids healthy school meals—and then to tackle those challenges together.

Over the course of the demonstration project, the 11 school districts representing 70 schools worked to make sure the cafeteria environment focused on fruits, non-fried vegetables, low fat dairy, protein and whole grains. Thirty-three of those schools have qualified for national recognition through the USDA's Healthier US School Challenge, a cornerstone of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign. Achieving this challenge puts these schools in an elite tier that only 2% of schools in the nation have achieved. Maine school nutrition programs continue to lead the nation in innovation, commitment and nutritional quality.



Early Childhood

These days, most young children attend an early childhood

program either for child care or for pre-school experience. *Let's Go!* considers these programs important partners because establishing healthy habits among children in their earliest years will increase their likelihood of adopting a healthy lifestyle as they grow. Early childhood centers are diverse in their ownership, size and focus. Some are large centers with multiple locations and large numbers of staff, others are home-based in a small setting with only the owner on site. Looking for an efficient way to work with these programs, *Let's Go!* found that most early childhood programs connect with licensing and training agencies to stay current on health topics for their children. *Let's Go!* launched the early childhood work with a partnership among regional and state training agencies. For example, Child Care Connections and Maine Roads to Quality include the 5-2-1-0 messages and strategies in their efforts.

Over the past five years, the *Let's Go!* early childhood effort developed a four-part approach to create healthy places and healthy people for the youngest children ages 0 to 5. The effort reaches children directly through child care settings and has a strong policy component by including the 5-2-1-0 messages in state policies, licensing and education functions. The 5-2-1-0 Goes to Child Care program promotes the same *Let's Go!* strategies for success that are promoted in schools and after school programs, reinforcing the message for children of all ages. *Let's Go!* has also tapped a group of experts to develop healthy eating and activity strategies for infants and toddlers in the 0 to 2 years of age group.

5-2-1-0 In Action in Early Childhood Programs

Early childhood program participants have enjoyed the program and have made many changes to increase healthy eating and activity. Almost all have implemented the strategies throughout their programs.

Programs have:

- Used mini-grants to purchase equipment and expand physical activity options
- Included parents in physical activity
- Improved menus by adding more healthy choices including reducing sodium content in foods
- Several have updated their policies to require the 5-2-1-0 strategies for children and staff

Making Progress

- In 34 child care programs
- Caring for 1,400 children



"5-2-1-0 has really made my life a lot easier as a child care director. *Let's Go!* comes in and support me with policies and procedures and they're always there as a resource for us. In my busy life as a director that is priceless!"

Camelia Babson-Haley, Program

Director, Youth and Family Outreach

After School

Like schools and early childhood programs, the after school environment provides ample opportunities for physical activity, as well as opportunities to reinforce healthy eating. In some ways the programs have more flexibility than public schools in making changes and, as community recreation centers, can lead the community in creating healthy places and habits. In 2009, *Let's Go!* quickly realized that after school programs come in many different sizes and shapes. Some programs are drop-in centers for teens, others are extensions of the school day offering programs at school and others are free standing organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs offering diverse services to children and teens. *Let's Go!* worked with all programs that were interested in joining. Many programs had great success with changes such as adopting policies for healthy snacks and celebrations. They did, however, face challenges posed by the varied program designs as well as the fact that the programs are packed into a few busy hours a day. Once the 5-2-1-0 strategies were established for schools and early childhood programs, it became clear that the same strategies would not only work in after school settings, but would be an important complement to the other settings.



Over the past year, *Let's Go!* has focused on the more structured after school programs and has seen success in the implementation of strategies to increase healthy eating and physical activity, adding emphasis to the multi-setting model.

5-2-1-0 in Action in After School Programs

Even though this work is in the early stages, after school programs are incorporating 5-2-1-0 into their routines.

Some actions include:

- Finding ways to celebrate with physical activity
- Implementing Healthy Living Guidelines
- Emphasizing healthy food choices
- Providing more physical activity
- Limiting sugary drinks

Making Progress

- Implemented in 28 after school programs
- Over 1,800 youth enrolled

“ All of our schools in the district are 5-2-1-0 schools. So it's great when we have our before care program and then we can send them off to school knowing that they are going to have a great nutritious lunch. And then they come back to us in the afternoon and then they'll have a nice healthy snack with outdoor activity.”

Nicole Gagnon

Childcare Coordinator: Before Care,

After Care and Pre-School, RSU #5,

Recreation and Community Education

Healthcare Practices

Healthcare providers play an important role in guiding families and children to make healthy choices for nutrition and physical activity. Introducing 5-2-1-0 messages in healthcare offices not only adds credibility to these healthy behaviors, it reinforces the connections across the other *Let's Go!* settings such as schools, early childhood and after school programs. *Let's Go!* developed tools and resources for providers to use with families in prevention, assessment and treatment of childhood obesity. Building on the earlier work of the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative, *Let's Go!* enhanced the toolkit and developed educational outreach visits to providers.

In the fifth year of *Let's Go!*, the healthcare program implemented two new components: the *Let's Go!* Healthcare Institutes and a recognition program. The institutes provide healthcare professionals with current research, an opportunity to learn and share knowledge about childhood obesity with colleagues around the state, and practical tips for next day implementation.

The program recognizes provider offices that:

- Connect *Let's Go!* to their community by hanging a *Let's Go!* poster in their offices
- Weigh and measure patients and assess weight status accurately
- Hold respectful conversations with patients and families about healthy habits and weight related issues using the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Habits Questionnaire

In Greater Portland, *Let's Go!* reached 29 of the 69 health care practices that care for children in the area. Overall, 17 practices received recognition as a *Let's Go!* healthcare site.



"I find it incredibly exciting that 5-2-1-0 and *Let's Go!* have become such a national model! That from the state of Maine, way up in one corner of the United States, this message has been incorporated by the American Academy of Pediatrics, by Michelle Obama with *Let's Move!* and that we are able to make such a difference nationally!"

Pamela M. Dietz, MD

Maine Medical Center, Pediatrics

Workplace

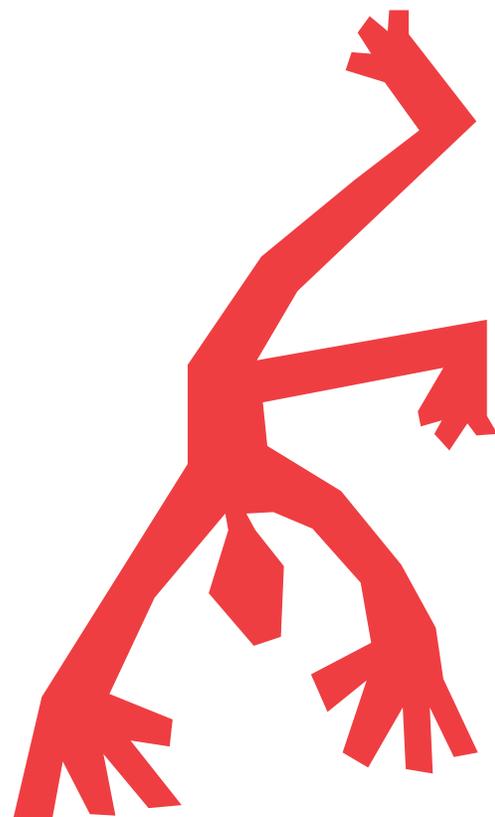


“One of the things that *Let’s Go!* has done for UNUM is utilization of the workplace toolkit which is right on the *Let’s Go!* website and it takes you through your basic steps to all different types of programs that you can run at the workplace for very minimal costs!”

Mike Booth, Manager of Health Promotion and Wellness Programs, UNUM

The Founding Partners, leaders from Maine’s largest employers, established the *Let’s Go!* program because they saw firsthand the impact of obesity on personal health and the costs of providing healthcare. It was apparent to them that parents may spend most of their waking hours in a workplace and therefore are influenced by the policies, environments and messages that surround them every day. Building on the energy of its founders, *Let’s Go!*’s first workplace project was the StairWELL campaign, a promotion that encouraged employees of the seven Founding Partners to increase their physical activity at work by taking the stairs instead of using the elevator. Some of the Founding Partners even stepped up and offered a personal challenge to take the stairs for 30 days.

The early effort was followed by the development of tools and resources to promote healthy eating and increased activity in the workplace. After working with the Founding Partners and other employers and learning about workplace wellness efforts, *Let’s Go!* developed an online workplace toolkit to complement the existing wellness programs. Some area employers, such as Maine Medical Center, have co-branded their wellness promotions with *Let’s Go!* to reinforce the 5-2-1-0 messages employees see at home and elsewhere.



Media and Marketing Communications

A robust media campaign was an essential component of *Let's Go!* Throughout the five years, *Let's Go!* targeted the Greater Portland region with the 5-2-1-0 messages through a variety of media. Enlisting the help of a marketing communications firm, *Let's Go!* used television, movie cinema ads, radio, newsprint, bus signs, stadium signs, website, Facebook, and Twitter to reinforce the 5-2-1-0 messages. The broadcast messages focused on the individual recommendations of the 5-2-1-0 message and used local families to help viewers develop a personal connection. With a limited budget, *Let's Go!* worked with local television stations to produce public service announcements and took advantage of other forms of “earned” media to spread the campaign. Local youth helped design some of the ads and even appeared in the spots. The marketing component helped to tie the messages together across the settings and throughout the region. Additionally, the communications work included supporting print materials and electronic outreach through email newsletters to subscribers.



Reflections on the past five years

1. A coordinated, multi-setting initiative that promotes 10 recommended strategies to increase healthy eating and physical activity can have a positive impact on awareness, knowledge and behaviors necessary to prevent childhood obesity in a community.

The *Let's Go!* model is working! After only a few years of full implementation, about one out of every two parents in the Greater Portland region is aware of *Let's Go!* or 5-2-1-0. Moreover, 96% of all parents had a “somewhat” or “very positive” reaction to the description of the program. More parents can correctly identify each of the recommendations and more are reporting changes in their child’s behaviors as well as their own. In formal surveys and informal discussions, partners working on *Let's Go!* locally say that the consistent messaging and community-wide approach gives them the support they need to promote the activities and make changes. The most important outcome from the five year demonstration project is that children’s behaviors are starting to change and early data measuring the prevalence of obesity show promises of slowing the increase among children in Greater Portland.

2. Parents with exposure to the *Let's Go!* 5-2-1-0 message in multiple settings had higher levels of awareness of the messages.

Surveys of parents show that those parents who report seeing or hearing the *Let's Go!* message in multiple settings have higher levels of awareness (86% for three or more reported exposures) compared to those that report lower exposure (34% for no reported exposure). The consistent messaging not only helps build awareness among families and children, but it builds the credibility of the effort when seen in various settings. *Let's Go!* champions in schools, early childhood centers and health care provider offices appreciate the reinforcement of their work through the consistent messaging. As a healthcare champion comments in a survey, “It just makes it easier to promote if the kids and families see it everywhere.” These champions have observed positive changes in children behaviors, increases in awareness, and interest in following the 5-2-1-0 recommendations.

3. Creating healthy places requires a balance of three efforts—implementing activities, adopting policies and creating supportive environments. These three efforts ultimately change the culture by reinforcing healthy behaviors in several ways.

While changing behaviors is hard, sustaining behavior change is even more difficult. *Let's Go!* has shown that the combination of implementing activities, making policy and environmental changes, and culture change are key to long-term success. The activities are needed to raise awareness and begin the process of behavior change. Local champions report that the activities build enthusiasm and support for the healthy choices. The policies and environments support the

activities by requiring and supporting positive and healthy behaviors. These are harder to effect in some settings, but when policies are in place and environments changed, champions observe greater behavior change. Culture shifts to embrace and reinforce the healthy behaviors remove the competing choices and objections and make it easier to follow the recommended behaviors. An example is found in the work with elementary schools. The schools with active administration support and active 5-2-1-0 teams were implementing more *Let's Go!* strategies than those without.

4. Both local and regional partners are essential to supporting the multi-setting, consistent messaging approach.

Let's Go! was founded by a group of business and community partners interested in addressing the growing public health concern of childhood obesity. This initial region-level partnership then spurred many new partnerships in local communities, as well as across the larger 12-community area and the state. Within settings, school nutrition directors were included on teams with school staff, a new partnership for most schools, leading to improvements in school nutrition programs. Early on, *Let's Go!* partnered with WinterKids to incorporate 5-2-1-0 into their winter programming for schools and early childhood programs. Across settings, healthcare providers conducted presentations in elementary schools. At the state level, *Let's Go!* partnered with the Maine Center for Disease Control and the local Healthy Maine Partnerships to create healthy places and healthy people across the state. Another example of new state-level collaboration was working with the early childhood program credentialing organization, Maine Roads to Quality, to include 5-2-1-0 messages in their training requirements. These partnerships provided new relationships, resources and ideas. Shared learning improved implementation of the effort and opened more doors to opportunities. Most importantly, the partnerships expanded and reinforced the consistent messaging that is seen as so important by the local champions and proven through the surveys with parents.

5. Innovation and risk-taking have allowed *Let's Go!* to evolve and grow quickly, basing the program on both proven and promising practices.

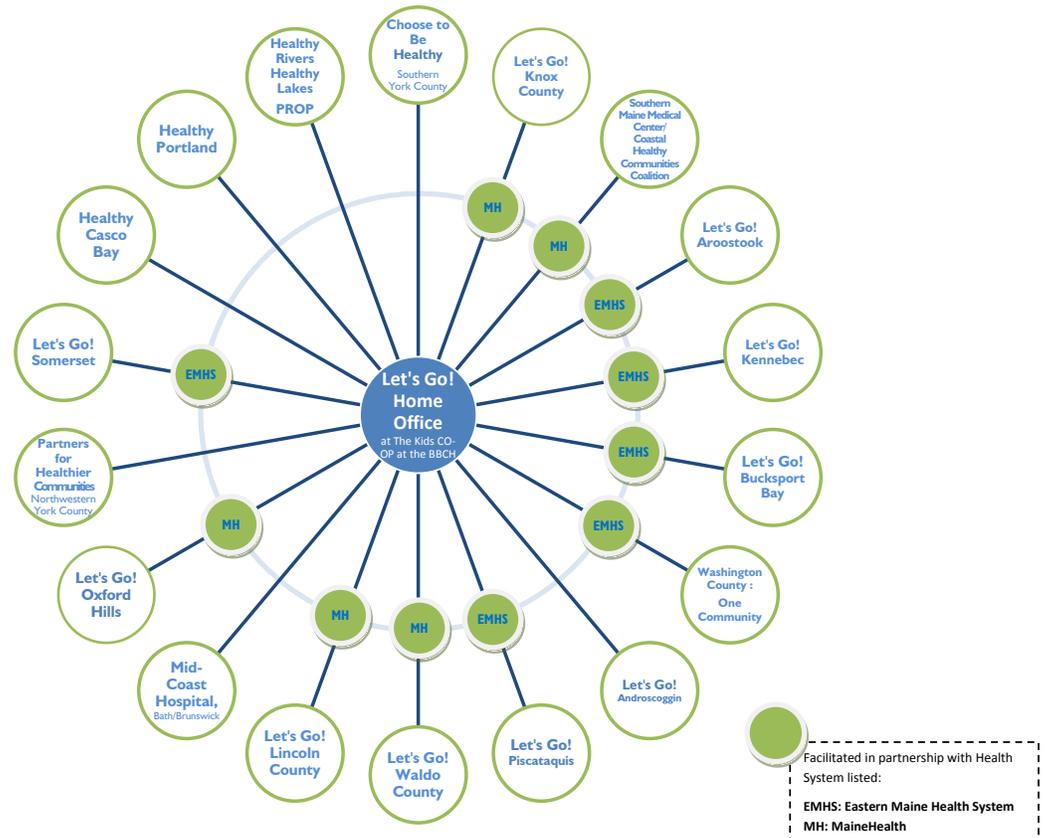
The program pulled from both proven science and promising practices to create a framework for implementation. Innovation came from relying on the four science-based recommendations (5-2-1-0) for improving health and using partner experiences in implementing community programs both for health promotion and social marketing efforts. Traditional outreach programs are typically designed and then funded or are required to follow a specific proven design. Usually, a lot of ground work is completed prior to receiving program operating support. *Let's Go!*'s experience in designing and shaping the model on the ground has helped create its own body of evidence and promising practices in addressing childhood obesity. It has stayed flexible in making needed changes, while remaining focused on the core messages. Partners, leaders and founders credit much of *Let's Go!*'s success to its committed staff, strong leadership and willingness to adapt to new opportunities and challenges.



Let's keep going

As Let's Go! wraps up its five-year demonstration project, it enters the next five years with confidence. The 5-2-1-0 message remains relevant, and working in partnership with health systems like MaineHealth and Eastern Maine Healthcare System, the Healthy Maine Partnerships and community organizations like United Way, *Let's Go!* continues to take off!

Current Let's Go! Dissemination Model



Dissemination Partners are implementing the Let's Go! model locally.

11/9/2011

MaineHealth, Maine Medical Center, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, United Way of Greater Portland, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, and Hannaford Bros. Co. are providing significant funding and in-kind resources to support continued implementation and dissemination of *Let's Go!*. Recently other major funders—including The Bingham Program, New Balance Foundation, Sam Cohen Foundation, Jane's Trust and The Walmart Foundation—have also stepped forward to support the work of *Let's Go!*.

Many Partners Share in the Passion, Work, and Successes in Creating Healthy People and Healthy Places in Greater Portland and Across the State.

Let's Go! collaborates with many organizations that serve children and families in Greater Portland or have an interest in promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing obesity. The successes reported here are attributable to the many partners working on shared health goals. Collaborators include, but are not limited to:

Local and Statewide Partners

- *Let's Go!* Dissemination Partners, including participating Healthy Maine Partnerships and health care systems
- Participating schools, child care programs, healthcare practices, after school programs, employers and communities
- Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, including the Maine Physical Activity and Nutrition Program
- Maine Department of Education
- Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services, including Maine Head Start
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension
- Maine Dairy and Nutrition Council
- Community based programs working to increase physical activity and healthy eating in Maine, including Maine-ly Nutrition and Take Time (a program of the Maine Nutrition Network) and WinterKids
- Maine After School Network

National Partners

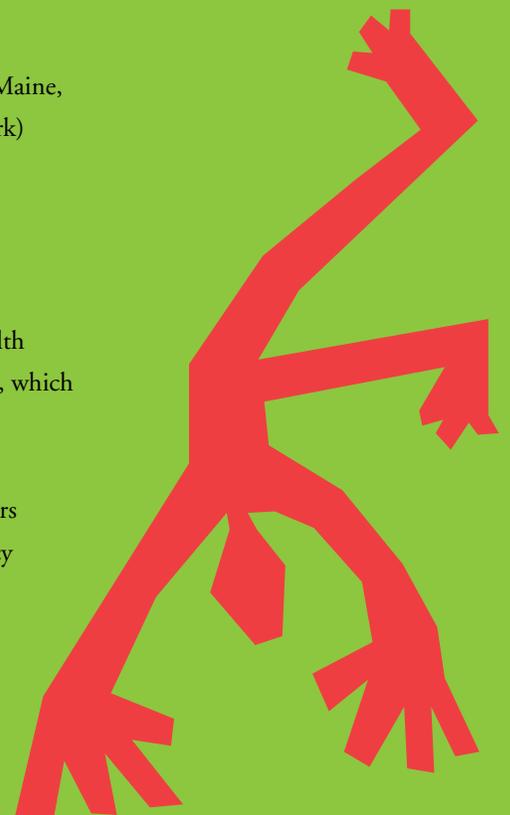
- National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality. *Let's Go!* is participating in the Health Resources and Services Administration funded Collaborate for Healthy Weight Initiative, which works to bring together public health, primary care and other community sectors for the prevention and treatment of individuals with overweight and obesity.
- Convergence Partnership. This partnership is a consortium of national leaders and funders committed to advancing healthy eating and active living-related environmental and policy changes. *Let's Go!* is actively participating in this consortium.
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Medical Association

We need all of you to help to us continue on the road to creating healthy communities across the great state of Maine.

Please join us and your local partners.

www.letsgo.org

207-662-3734



5 or more fruits & vegetables
2 hours or less recreational screen time*
1 hour or more of physical activity
0 sugary drinks, more water & low fat milk

*Keep TV/Computer out of the bedroom. No screen time under the age of 2.



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