

Time for healthier foods

By Sarah Sobanski

Hastings and Prince Edward county parents can't find the time to get their kids healthier options, according to a report by the **Healthy Kids Community Challenge**.

The review suggests 60 per cent of parents surveyed in consultations said finding the time was a barrier in accessing healthier foods and beverages. The review was undertaken to identify priorities for the healthy kids program last fall.

Parents also cited cost, dietary restrictions, distance to grocers and picky eaters as barriers.

“Parents were asked if they experience any challenges that make it difficult for their family to consume healthier foods and/or beverages,” said local project manager for the challenge Emma Pillsworth, “Many of these challenges are environmental and societal factors that we can help families overcome by implementing the recommendations made in this report. It will take a community effort to help remove barriers and make it easier for children and their families to make healthier choices.”

More than 260 parents were surveyed along with 70 stakeholders. The program also held focus group discussions.

Parents recommended implementing more hydrations stations, increasing access to healthier choices at municipal facilities and increasing access to school and community gardens and food skills and cooking classes. Over 60 per cent of organizations surveyed suggested they already have on-site amenities supporting healthy eating and or drinking. These include kitchens, group meal spaces, healthy food dispensers, fountains and or gardens.

“The Healthy Kids Community Challenge community partners have already taken steps towards implementing recommendations made in the report,” said Pillsworth. “A knowledge sharing event was held on March 23, which gave community partners a chance to discuss recommendations and plan next steps, which will range from small organization changes such as having vegetables and fruits available at all events where food is served, to larger policy changes such as municipal food and beverage procurement policies.”

Organizations surveyed were more likely to encourage children to drink healthier than eat healthier. Close to 70 per cent suggested they have policies in place to encourage the consumption of healthier beverages while only 47 per cent have the same for healthier foods.

The report can be found on Hastings Prince Edward Public Health's website [here](#).]

“We are very grateful to the many community members and community partners who participated in the consultation process,” Pillsworth said in a press release on the review. “Work is already underway to put a number of the recommendations into action within our community.”