



Engaging the Mind, Body and Soul

Triple Play Helps Club Members Get Fit



By Brian Hill

Jasmine, 15, a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Nash/Edgecombe Counties in Rocky Mount, N.C., dreamed of making her school's volleyball team. Cut after only the first round of tryouts, she was down on herself. Seeing Jasmine's disappointment, her friend William, a fellow member of the Club and president of its Keystone organization, wanted to help.

Jasmine needed to build her self-confidence and get in shape for the next season's volleyball tryouts. So William and other Keystoners – they know how to get a special project going – approached Shonda Johnson, director of the Rocky Mount Club's Brewer Unit. Their idea – implement a great program from Boys & Girls Clubs of America called Triple Play: A Game Plan for the Mind, Body and Soul.

As a result, kids in Rocky Mount are not only healthier, they're having fun along the way.

A Weighty Issue

Jasmine's fitness struggles are common among today's youth. According to the Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of young people who are overweight has more than tripled since 1980. Among children and teens, 16 percent – nearly 9 million young people – are considered overweight. These children often continue this condition when they become adults, with increased risk of medical complications such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and psychological problems.

In response to the growing number of young Americans who are not leading active, healthy lifestyles, BGCA developed Triple Play with support from The Coca-Cola Company and Kraft Foods. The program teaches young people about eating right, keeping fit and engaging in positive relationships.

"Triple Play is a holistic approach to improving the health of children," says Judith J. Pickens, BGCA's senior vice president of Program & Youth Development Services. "Although many young people participate in some sports and fitness activities, they are not always physically fit. They often lack the basic knowledge needed to make positive food choices. Triple Play demonstrates how eating right, keeping fit and forming positive relationships add up to a healthy, positive and productive lifestyle for Club members."

During development of the program, BGCA looked to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for guidance and resources. "Childhood obesity is a serious issue in this nation – one that HHS cannot tackle alone," says Rear Admiral Penelope Slade Royall, deputy assistant

secretary for health. "We're pleased to be working with our partners to help our children move off the sofa and onto the playground."

It Takes Three

Triple Play's first component, Mind, focuses on making smart food choices. The heart of this element is Healthy Habits, a 10-session curriculum covering such topics as calories, vitamins and minerals; the food pyramid; and appropriate portion size. BGCA worked with leading nutritionists to develop Healthy Habits.

The program's second component, Body, takes a systematic approach to boosting traditional physical activities in Boys & Girls Clubs to a higher level by engaging all youth in sports and fitness activities. The Body component also includes the newly-revised Daily Challenges, six activities – such as jumping rope and playing basketball – that give youth of every age the chance to play longer and harder at different games.

Soul, the final component of Triple Play, is designed to improve young people's healthy social development. Through games, contests and other activities,

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Services*

youth can enhance motor skills, boost their creativity, increase social skills, and lift their confidence and self-esteem. To support this area, The Smart Guide to Social Recreation: Effective Gamesroom Management and Leadership provides strategies and tools to run a topnotch social recreation program. This how-to resource offers Clubs guidance on various drop-in activities, onthe- spot fun, structured activities and special events.

Program Goals

All Boys & Girls Clubs are encouraged to implement the three aspects of Triple Play to meet four goals established for the program, which are to increase: 1. Club members' knowledge of healthy habits, good nutrition and physical fitness; 2. The number of hours per day members participate in physical activities; 3. Club members' ability to interact positively with all youth and engage in healthy relationships; and 4. The number of youth joining Boys & Girls Clubs and the frequency of attendance among existing members. A pre-/post-survey is available to help Clubs evaluate the Healthy Habits curriculum. BGCA is also conducting a two-year study to record the progress of Triple Play.

Getting Started

Want to implement Triple Play in your Club? Check out the program's great new Web site, which can be found under the Programs/Sports, Fitness & Recreation tab on bgca.net. You'll see a detailed program overview as well as curriculum downloads, including Healthy Habits and Daily Challenges. The Smart Guide to Social Recreation: Effective Gamesroom Management and Leadership can also be downloaded from the site, or you may order a hard copy by contacting BGCA's Llewellyn LaRocque at (404) 487-5957. For additional information about Triple Play, contact BGCA's Wayne Moss at (404) 487-5761 or wmoss@bgca.org.

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(Cont.)

Reaping the Results

Back in Rocky Mount, Club members are benefiting from all aspects of Triple Play.

"Healthy Habits helps us make good decisions about what we eat," says Danielle, 13. "It also helps us maintain healthy body weight when we become older."

One of the first steps the Rocky Mount Club took was to limit the amount of high-calorie foods in the facility. The Club began offering healthier snacks and asked parents who send refreshments to do the same.

The Club reinforces healthy eating concepts by integrating them into other activities. "We learn about Healthy Habits during our gym time," says Ja'Quez, 9. "I learn about smart food choices while playing and having fun."

Club members are not the only ones learning how to make smart eating choices. "Many of our kids' families and Club staff have taken a more health-conscious approach to daily living," says Club director Johnson.

The Body component is also making a big difference. "It helps us to exercise and get in shape," says Quinisha, 16. "It also provides us with an opportunity to develop sportsmanship and teamwork skills."

Finally, Club members are also embracing the Soul of Triple Play. "I really enjoy spending time socializing with my friends and competing against staff and parents during Family Nights," says 14-year-old Teniesha. "As a member of the Triple Play Sports Club, I help plan activities for Family Nights. The gamesroom tournaments and volleyball games have been a lot of fun."

A Happy Ending

And what of Jasmine and her quest for the volleyball team? With help from William and his fellow Keystoneers, the Club used Triple Play to develop a comprehensive summer fitness program that included workouts, mini-sports and conditioning clinics, and the Healthy Habits curriculum. Jasmine was the first Club member on board with the new program.

"She worked very hard last summer to accomplish her goal," says Johnson. "By the end of the summer, she was a skilled athlete, had improved her eating habits and had an enormous sense of self-worth, combined with confidence."

The result? This school year, Jasmine not only made her school volleyball and softball teams – she was named co-captain of both.

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*–Danielle, 13, Boys & Girls Clubs of Nash/Edgecombe Counties,
Rocky Mount, N.C.*

Brian Hill is director of public relations for BGCA.

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Jasmine is all smiles thanks to a little help from her friend William and the Triple Play program (top); members of the BGCs of Nash/Edgecombe Counties practice their skills on the volleyball court and in the gamesroom (above).