

PEOPLE

Ragalie, Glick Leading the Healthy-Kid Brigade

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COURTESY NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL

Fueled up: Ragalie (left) and Glick

A little more than a year since first lady Michelle Obama launched the "Let's Move" campaign, the national drive to end childhood obesity is shifting into high gear.

Led by the dairy industry, the National Football League, and three federal departments, a massive push is under way to improve nutrition and increase exercise among kids—more than a third of whom are overweight, according to government statistics.

The effort kicked off in earnest at the Super Bowl last month with the announcement of an expanded public-private partnership to address obesity problems.

The intensity of the campaign reflects the difficulties dealing with a simple but entrenched problem, said **Jean Ragalie**, president of the National Dairy Council.

"The obesity epidemic didn't happen in a year, and it's not going to be solved in a year," Ragalie said earlier this month after a day of meetings with federal officials involved in the effort. "It doesn't take rocket science, but it really does take all of us working together."

Alexis Glick, a former business anchor and vice president at Fox News who is leading a new foundation focused on obesity, said the challenge is clearly defined. "How do we create a movement that will change behavior?" she said.

"Simple changes can make a huge difference in the life of a child."

They are on point in the nation's anti-obesity campaign: Ragalie oversees the "Fuel Up to Play 60" program, a Dairy Council and NFL partnership that helps schools enhance their nutrition and exercise programs; Glick is CEO of the newly formed Gen YOUth Foundation, which hopes to build on Fuel Up through fundraising and awarding grants for local projects.

Ragalie is a career dietician from the Chicago area who has been guiding the Dairy Council's nutrition programs since 1996. About a dozen years ago, she and her colleagues noticed that obesity rates were rising at the same time that consumption of dairy products was declining—a sign that many young people were opting for sugary drinks and snacks instead of healthier ones.

As media attention to the problem grew in recent years, the Dairy Council and the NFL started Fuel Up to Play 60, in which students devise their own ways to promote healthier eating habits and getting at least an hour of exercise each day. The 70 pilot projects started in 2008 were so successful that Fuel Up spread to 70,000 schools last year, and dairy farmers—"who are very passionate about nutrition," Ragalie said—committed to providing the program \$50 million a year for five years.

Fuel Up is designed to be a school club run by an adult, but mostly it's about "youth empowerment," Ragalie said. "It's not a prescriptive program—it's what do kids want to do?" Some work on improving the food choices in their school lunch lines or vending machines, she said, while others organize walking clubs or sporting activities.

But the real energy comes with the involvement of all 32 NFL teams, Ragalie noted. "The kids are connected to their local team," she said. "Players go to schools, and they are the epitome of what good nutrition and physical activity can accomplish."

The NFL's involvement put the program on in the spotlight last month during the lead-up to Super Bowl XLV in Irving, Texas. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell hosted a news conference announcing the formation of the Gen YOUth Foundation and signed a Memorandum of Understanding that added the Education and the Health and Human Services departments to a list of government partners that already included the Agriculture Department.

The New York City-based foundation Glick leads has a high profile, with Surgeon General David Satcher, former NFL star Howie Long, and Washington celebrity chef Carla Hall among its board members. Domino's Pizza, Kraft Foods, LALA USA, and Leprino Foods provided the foundation's initial funding, and grants are beginning to be made on a daily basis for projects ranging from buying new cafeteria equipment to constructing running tracks at schools, Glick said.

"We are starting in what we believe to be a really phenomenal position," she said.

Glick, who has three young sons, said her special emphasis is on getting more kids to eat a healthy breakfast and removing the stigma that keeps some children from participating in the government's school-meals program.

"We need to teach that participation in breakfast is cool, that guys in the NFL eat breakfast," she said. "If kids eat breakfast, there is a direct correlation to academic performance."