

McDonald's, Greene go distance to strike healthful balance

By Brooke Barrier

The wheels barely had stopped spinning on exercise physiologist Bob Greene's bicycle before McDonald's set into motion yet another national nutrition program: a balanced-lifestyle plan for children.

For the past year McDonald's

has been working with Greene, who is best known for his role as Oprah Winfrey's personal trainer, to develop various health and exercise programs for adult consumers. Now the restaurant company and Greene are expanding their reach to children as well.

"Bob has become America's trainer," said Mike Donahue, vice president of U.S. communications for McDonald's. "There's no one better to tell people about how they can begin this journey."

It was during the running of McDonald's Go Active! American

Challenge, in which Greene biked and walked across the United States, that the Oakbrook, Ill.-based company announced the startup of its new McDonald's Happy Meal options for kids. According to Donahue, the program is set to debut in all 13,500

U.S. locations this month. It will give children the opportunity to mix and match items, including white and chocolate milk, apple juice and Apple Dippers, which are slices of apples served with caramel dipping sauce.

"As a leader in the industry, we're doing our part to fight obesity," Donahue says. "And we encourage others to do the same."

"When I started with McDonald's," Greene says. "I was excited because they wanted to use many different avenues to help people make smart food choices and increase their levels of activity."

In Greene's partnership with McDonald's he has developed educational booklets and tray liners, which "reach nearly 23 million consumers each day," he said. He also has participated in speaking engagements, public-service announcements and national media tours — most recently, the Go Active! Challenge, which had the goal of raising public awareness about the importance of leading an active lifestyle.

Greene recently finished the Southern leg of the 36-day challenge that started on April 20, 2004, in Los Angeles and ended in Washington, D.C., on May 25. During the trip he stopped in 36 markets in 12 different states to host walking events, hold educational seminars, and give tips on eating and stretching.

Greene asks participants of Go Active! to sign a letter of commitment, promising to increase their physical activity and eat better.

As another aspect of the challenge, McDonald's introduced nationally the Go Active! Adult Happy Meal, \$4.99, including a choice of four salads, a bottle of water, a medium drink, a Stepometer and a Step With It! Booklet, which is available through July 4. The Stepometer and booklet are yet another effort to raise public awareness about healthful eating and fitness by monitoring the number of steps taken in a day and making suggestions for increasing one's activity level.

"One thing we know from studies is that there are two groups: one who moves a lot and one who doesn't," Green said. "We want to educate people on how many steps they're taking and help them increase that number. It's a mechanism to raise consciousness."

He added: "People are hungry for this info. They're listening to it, and so McDonald's timing is good."

Greene is set to hit the road again in July and plans to visit 12 markets in the Northern part of the country.

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