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**CONTACT:** Anne Molgaard

(707) GO CHILD, 462-4453

## Local Childcare Provider Loses 50lbs Thanks to Local Fitness and Nutrition Classes

Danna Johnston has worked hard to change her and her family's habits; and the changes have been incredible. A mother of four and childcare provider for eight more children, Johnston has attended classes offered at Mendocino College and almost all the classes offered through the Rural Communities Child Care (RCCC). She credits these classes as the reason her family's health has improved and how she was able to lose a whopping 50lbs.

Johnston says a few of the most influential classes were Sugar Savvy, SPARK and Food for Thought trainings and garden building through the Gardens Project.

After losing the weight and managing to keep it off, Johnston says programs like Food for Thought have been extremely effective in learning about food and how to prepare it.

"It's important to try new foods and to stimulate a kid's palate so they learn to eat a bigger variety of foods," she said.

Another effective program offered to Johnston is SPARK, which stands for Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids.

"SPARK is a curriculum with lots of activities for kids designed to teach them gross motor movements and keep them moving," says Adrienne Binder, Nutrition and Fitness Coordinator at FIRST 5 Mendocino. "It incorporates lots of fun, colorful equipment and music. Child care providers and teachers find that they are more active themselves with SPARK because they often do the activities with their children."

Another important goal of RCCC classes is to give proper training to those that work with children on a daily basis, like childcare providers such as Johnston. This training gives providers the knowledge and approach they need when teaching kids how to be healthy.

Johnston has noticed that the children she takes care are also learning what's nutritious and how to prepare healthy meals, information they take home to their families.

"The parents tell me how their kids just want to cook with them," she said, "And they even want to help them do the dishes!"

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Last year, RCCC received a \$5,000 grant from FIRST 5 Mendocino to expand its program to promote more nutritious food choices and the importance of daily physical activity for young children, specifically ages zero to 5.

If you would like to learn more about any of these programs mentioned, contact North Coast Opportunities at (707) 462-1954.

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