

# THE SUN

TODAY 90/62

## Staying slim in the summer

### Effort helps kids fight seasonal weight gain

By Jim Steinberg Staff Writer

The game is simple — run to the blackboard, put down one letter of the word for a vegetable or fruit, then race back to a teammate.

Boys squared off against girls on a hot afternoon recently in the air-conditioned Johnson Center on San Bernardino's West-

The spelling relay was part of the "Power Up Your Summer Challenge," sponsored by the Desert Sierra Health Network, a unit of the Network for a Healthy California. The effort is one of several designed to counter kids' weight gain during summer.

"For many students, summer break is also a break from healthy habits fostered in the structured school environment," said Pam-

### SUMMER AS



Destiny Davis, 9, left, and Kayla Bonds, 7, play Will boxing last week at the Johnson Center in San Bernardino. Lefronzo Carter Staff Photographer

### SUMMER

From Al  
ela Sr., a coordinator for  
Network for a Healthy Cali-

fornia.

"Instead of scheduled  
meals and snacks, chil-

dren at home during sum-

mer break may have con-

tinuous access to  
unhealthy snacks," she

said. "In place of recess,  
time watching television

and playing video games,  
It all adds up to more calo-

ries consumed and less  
burned."

The Network for a  
Healthy California repre-

sents a statewide move-

ment of partners working  
toward improving the

health of low-income Cali-

fornians  
through  
increased fruit and vegeta-

ble consumption and daily  
physical activity.

A national public-health  
study in 2007 found that

three subgroups were espe-

cially at risk for weight  
gains during the summer  
vacation: black children,

Latino children and chil-

dren who were already  
overweight at the begin-

ning of kindergarten.  
Childhood obesity rates  
in the United States have  
tripled over the last 20  
years.

Anthony Revis, owner  
of Top Flight ESO Inc., led  
about 50 children at the  
Johnson Center recently  
in the highly competitive  
spelling relay.

"This is a place to get  
out of the house and do  
something," said Noah  
Raheem, 14. "This really  
beats being outside." Only  
Top Flight's program,  
which runs from 2 to 6  
p.m. weekdays, exclusively

### SUMMER

fornia.  
Network for a Healthy Cali-

words like "tomato," "water-

melon" and "carrot" faster than  
the boys.

But both seemed equally  
fleece-footed in the dash from a  
staging area, which happened

to be a theatrical stage, to a  
blackboard.

After 30 minutes, there was  
little doubt calories were  
burned.

"Weight gain in children is  
quite common in the summer,"  
said Dr. Warren R. Peters, direc-

tor of the Center for Health  
Promotion at Loma Linda Uni-

versity.  
"The sad story is that chil-

dren are only a reflection of  
their parents. ... Sitting at the  
beach does not burn a lot of

calories."  
Since the beginning of the  
Industrial Revolution, physical

work has been dropping out of  
the equation for most families,  
Peters said.

In an era when you use only  
seven calories to collect 2,000  
calories at a fast-food restau-

rant, exercise should be sched-

uled like all other appoint-

ments, he said.  
Julie Mamford, a registered  
dietician for the San Bernar-

dino County Department of  
Public Health, said parents  
should "keep healthy snacks  
like strawberries, watermelon,  
carrots and other summer  
fruits and vegetables within  
reach.

"These are not only delicious  
but are generally inexpensive  
this time of year and a great  
way to eat right when the mon-

ey's right."  
"If kids can't get outside,  
encourage active indoor play,"  
Mamford said. "Even simple  
things like turning on their  
favorite music and dancing,  
cheerleading, playing freeze  
dance, limbo or hide-and-seek  
can get them moving to avoid  
the summer slump."

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