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HEALTHY BEVERAGES FOCUS OF NUTRITION MONTH IN YUKON

WHITEHORSE – Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers has announced today two initiatives that help mark March as ‘Nutrition Month’ and April as ‘Dental Health Month’ in the Yukon.

Both the “Drop the Pop” and “Drink to Your Health” campaigns kick off mid-week in the Yukon. Both initiatives are aimed at increasing awareness and educating Yukon youth and their parents about healthy beverages.

“Many parents, teachers and community members are concerned that children drink a lot of pop and other drinks that have little or no nutritional value. Drinking two cans of pop a day for a week provides one pound of sugar a week, or more than two cups,” Cathers said. “Drinking pop contributes to the obesity epidemic, the rising rates of Type II diabetes and dental decay. Making healthier drink choices improves overall physical and dental health. National Nutrition Month in March and Dental Health Month in April provide us with an opportunity to educate children and their parents about healthier choices.”

The “Drop the Pop” campaign challenges elementary school students to make healthier beverage choices from March 27 to 31. Students will be encouraged to abstain from drinking pop for five days. Participating students will get temporary tattoos and stickers. Schools and classrooms with the greatest drop in pop consumption will receive prizes which support healthy living practices. Challenges will be happening in both NWT and Nunavut at the same time as in the Yukon.

The second initiative is “Drink to your Health,” a campaign aimed at supporting healthy drink choices in homes. Three fridge magnets have been developed to help remind people of healthy drink choices when they go to their refrigerator. The magnets come with a brochure to help people understand the pros and cons of different choices.

“This is information that everyone should have,” Community Health Programs director Paula Pasquali said. “Water is one of the best choices for our bodies. Milk, chocolate milk, and yogurt drinks are also good – they build and maintain strong bones for people of all ages. And juice, in small quantities, is also a good choice. For people of all ages, substituting water for pop is a simple, cost-saving step that is also good for you. We hope the fridge magnets will serve as gentle reminders of the small steps each of us can take to make healthier choices.”

Although packages are initially being sent home with elementary school children, they will also be distributed through other venues such as daycares. Anyone interested in receiving a package can contact hss@gov.yk.ca, call 667-3003 or view online at: www.hss.gov.yk.ca/programs/health_promotion.

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