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Contact: Dan Jacobs
Phone: 936-637-8542
Cell: 936-229-0072
daniel.jacobs@woodlandheights.net

Woodland Heights and Lufkin Middle School partner education students about eating disorders

Lufkin, TX, February 21, 2010 – Woodland Heights Medical Center and Lufkin Middle School are partnering during National Eating Disorder Awareness week to education students about proper nutrition as well as the signs, causes and dangers of eating disorders. This week, a Registered Dietitian will speak with students about common eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating.

“Eating disorders are a growing and serious risk for our children,” said Vickie Evans, Lufkin Middle School Principal. “We want to create a safe and constructive environment for our students to learn. Addressing important health issues, such as eating disorders, are one more way we can serve our students better.”

More than just bad eating habits, eating disorders involved consuming insufficient or excessive food to satisfy a psychological or emotional, not a physical, need. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, eating disorders affect as many as 10 million females and one million males in the United States. Typically developing during adolescence or early adulthood, eating disorders are serious medical conditions, which if untreated can cause severe and potentially fatal health problems.

“Social pressures and peer pressure cause girls – and sometimes boys – to become so obsessed with weight and shape that they starve themselves” said Ranjani Reddy, RD, at Woodland Heights Medical Center. “Teachers, parents and healthcare professionals can help prevent kids from developing an eating disorder by fostering good self-esteem and encouraging healthy and realistic attitudes about nutrition and body image. That’s what we are doing this week – discussing proper nutrition and cultivating good, realistic attitudes.”

According to the National Eating Disorders Association, there has been unprecedented growth of eating disorders during the past two decades. The most common eating disorders are (1) anorexia, when a child refuses to eat adequate calories out of an intense and irrational fear of becoming fat, (2) bulimia, when a child overeats and then purges the food by vomiting or using laxatives to prevent weight gain, and (3) binge eating, a condition in which a child may gorge rapidly on food without purging. All of these conditions can cause serious health issues and even death if not treated by a professional. In fact, anorexia has the highest premature mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder.

A Woodland Heights dietitian will speak with both girls and boys separately at 10 and 11 a.m. on Tuesday, February 23 and Wednesday, February 24, 2010, at Lufkin Middle School. To learn more about common eating disorders, visit the ‘Health Resources’ section of the

Woodland Heights website at www.woodlandheights.net. If you suspect an eating disorder, speak with your family physician.

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