

Educate, Activate, Motivate

by Cindi Juncal

The Noble Path Foundation is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to raising awareness on the importance of healthy nutrition and lifestyle choices for kids, because it is ultimately their health which determines our future. As its founder and president, I have been granted the wonderful opportunity to share my thoughts and suggestions here in this column over the past two years on all manner of topics: from carbs, lectins and kid's meals, to detoxes, addictions, and even how food choices can help prevent Alzheimers. Our focus however, remains on the children because it is their generation – and their future generations – which will be facing the consequences of consuming the sub-standard, highly-processed junk food fueling the diseases that are now threatening their well-being and longevity.

The Standard American Diet (also known by its eerily suitable acronym, SAD) is characterized by high amounts of ultra-processed foods, refined carbohydrates and fats, added sugars, and high-fat dairy products and meat. According to a 2010 report from the National Cancer Institute on the status of the American diet, three out of four Americans don't eat a single piece of fruit in a given day, and nearly nine out of ten don't reach the minimum recommended daily intake of vegetables. On a weekly basis, 96% of Americans don't reach the minimum for greens or beans (three servings a week for adults), 98% don't reach the minimum for orange vegetables (two servings a week), and 99% don't reach the minimum for whole grains (about three to four ounces a day). "In conclusion," the researchers wrote, "nearly the entire U.S. population consumes a diet that is not on par with recommendations. These findings add another piece to the rather disturbing picture that is emerging of a nation's diet in crisis."

As if a food crisis wasn't dire enough, the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics (NCDAS) highlighted in their 2021 report that drug use among 8th graders had increased 61% between 2016 and 2020. By 12th grade, 62% of teenagers have abused alcohol and 86% know of teenagers who smokes, drinks, or uses drugs during the school day. Teenagers in California are 24% more likely to have used drugs in the last month than the average American teen.

Our children's mental health is also at risk. Whether they are abusing or simply falling prey to junk food or drugs (both have the similar effect of producing dopamine in the nucleus accumbens), many will also suffer from low self-esteem, poor body image, lack of self-confidence, withdrawal from friends and family, and even suicidal thoughts. The psychological harm is only exacerbated by social media and



Fitness Room



Multipurpose Room

unattainable marketing images of physical prowess, beauty and success.

To the kids struggling with life as it is, there are few options that offer a solution to their dilemma. They are told to "lose weight," "exercise more", and "make better choices," often without direction or concrete advice on how to do so. It is for this reason, we work so passionately to offer a solution in the form of education, awareness and opportunities to help alleviate their discomfort and empower them with the belief that they actually have some control over their destinies.

In late November of 2021 we will open our doors to what we hope will function as a safe haven for the youth of our local neighborhoods. Our building will be a place to gather, play, socialize and learn about the topics and activities that can nourish both body and mind. By partnering with like-minded non-profits like Community Outreach Alliance (COA) and offering a home to their Thrive Alive series, TGIF Gamerz and Wellness Wednesdays, we enhance our own Nourish to Flourish" referral

program which will include all these initiatives, as well as free access to our fitness room, home-work bar and media living space during our Open Door hours.

With the help and dedication of an outstanding board and advisory panel consisting of nutritionist Melissa Mathes, MPH, RDN, CSSD; pediatrician Paulina Avendaño, MD, FAAP; trainers Samantha Blankenburg, BS Sports Medicine, Joshua Kuluris, BS Kinesiology, and Becca Swanson, BS Kinesiology, we offer a professional and well-rounded approach to fitness, nutrition and wellness. Our goal is to educate young minds, activate their interests, elevate their potential and motivate their desire for a happier and healthier self. While we will continue to provide our free Real Food Forums to grades K-12, and sports specific nutrition seminars to athletic teams, our new building gives us the opportunity and space to accomplish all of these things, and more - and with absolutely no cost to the young participants and their families.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks

to the San Clemente Journal for the gift of this beautiful platform to spread awareness and to all our amazing volunteers, precious donors and everyone else who supports and lifts us up to accomplish bigger and brighter deeds than we ever thought possible. We are so grateful to be of service to our community and hope you will stop by and visit us at 420 N. El Camino Real. For information on how to apply for our Nourish to Flourish referral program or to schedule a visit to The Noble Path Foundation prior to our grand opening, please contact Cindi at (949)981-4998 or cindi@thenoblepathfoundation.org.

Cindi is President and Founder of The Noble Path Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to raising awareness on childhood obesity, T2 diabetes and the importance of sound nutrition and lifestyle choices for our youth. For sources and links to the statistics mentioned in this article, please visit our website and search for the article under our blog at www.thenoblepathfoundation.org.