



Hobbit adventure helps keep kids healthy

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Jon Landers, center, leads participants in a hobbit adventure on a quest.

BELFAST — Jon Landers of Belfast has been volunteering at the Game Loft for about a year and in October he helped children in grades 3-6 with a hobbit adventure. He enjoyed being outside with the youngsters, running around and assisting them to complete the quests they were presented with.



What he didn't know was that he was helping those participants meet the goals of Let's Go! Waldo 5-2-1-0.

That changed when Landers attended a celebration dinner Let's Go! Waldo was having at the Waldo County Technical Center. At the dinner, as he described the hobbit adventure, he realized he had been helping the children get at least one hour of physical exercise, limiting their recreational screen

time to less than two hours, keeping them from drinking sugary drinks and helping them move toward the goal of five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Landers says he had heard of the 5-2-1-0 slogan before; he and the participants were doing what they should be doing; and the principles are something he agrees with, but he hadn't really thought of the hobbit adventure in that way.

He also didn't know when he agreed to go to the dinner with Ray and Pat Estabrook, creators and facilitators for the Game Loft, that the food was going to be all vegetarian. But the high school freshman says the meal was delicious and he asked for the recipes so he could duplicate the meals at home.

Among the dishes were roasted spaghetti squash, flavored with garlic, olive oil and Parmesan cheese; roasted beets and carrots with cardamom and pepper; and maple poached pear with spiced syrup reduction.

The experience has gotten Landers excited about possibly attending the Tech Center in the culinary program (or the computer program if culinary doesn't work out). He's also pleased to know that without really intending to, the children who attended the hobbit adventure were working toward developing healthier habits.

The fact that Game Loft programs met the goals of 5-2-1-0 isn't really surprising when you consider its mission is to provide "a safe, supervised location for local youth to play games with friends, engage with the community, and eat a healthy meal." In fact, the Game Loft is a registered Let's Go! Waldo out-of-school site.

The other three community sectors for Let's Go! are child care, schools and healthcare providers. They all make a commitment to engage families and children in making healthy choices, with the end goal being to reduce childhood obesity.

At the celebration meal Landers attended, Belfast nutritionist John Bagnulo, Ph.D., spoke about some of the current research on the three macronutrients, carbohydrates, fats and proteins, and provided tips on making the best dietary choices.

Dr. Victoria Rogers, director of the Let's Go! program in Portland, discussed how the Let's Go! program is expanding its work into food pantries and into facilities that work with special needs children, providing support for getting more vegetables to all Maine families.

Receiving awards at the dinner for their work with Let's Go! were:

- Child care: gold level — Waldo CAP Early Head Start in Unity, Belfast Area Children's Center, Grammie's Child Care, Jim & Bon's Daycare, First Steps and Cindy's Daycare; silver level — Broadreach Services and Walker Pre-K.

- Schools: silver level — Mount View Elementary, Mount View High School, Monroe Elementary, Troy Elementary, Walker Elementary, Captain Albert Stevens School and Searsport Elementary; bronze level — Islesboro Central School, Cornerspring Montessori, Ames Elementary and Kermit Nickerson Elementary.
- Out of School: gold level — Ames/Weymouth 21st Century program, Searsport Elementary 21st Century program, Searsport Middle School 21st Century program, East Belfast 21st Century program and Captain Albert Stevens 21st Century program.
- Healthcare sites of distinction: Belfast Pediatrics, Belfast Natural Medicine, Donald Walker Health Center, Lincolnville Regional Health Center, Searsport Health Center, Stockton Springs Regional Health Center, Arthur Jewell Health Center, Waldo County Medical Partners Family Medicine and Waldo County Medical Partners Belfast Family Practice.