

Michelle Obama Tackles Obesity—Mississippi Has the Highest Rate of Obese Children

By Ericka Blount Danois on Mar 4th 2010
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First lady **Michelle Obama** continues to tackle childhood obesity, with her “Let’s Move” campaign, taking her message to Jackson, Miss., yesterday at a school that has been lauded for fighting obesity by keeping kids active.

The state, however, ranks No. 1 in childhood and adult obesity. According to



the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 13 percent of the country’s high schoolers are considered obese, 70 percent do not attend daily physical education classes and 65 percent do not meet the recommended levels for getting physical activity.

The first lady’s campaign has four parts: helping parents make better food choices, serving healthier food in school vending machines and lunch lines, making healthy food more available and affordable and encouraging children to exercise more.

The Child Nutrition Act that is up for reauthorization, includes \$10 billion over 10 years to help with those issues.

The Mississippi Department of Education has started several programs to increase physical activity at schools, boost the consumption of fruit and vegetables in lunchrooms and reduce fried foods on school menus.

The CDC has long said that nearly a third of Americans are obese. In 2009, Mississippi had the highest rate of adult obesity, 32.5 percent, for the fifth year in a row.

Mississippi also had the highest rate of

overweight and obese children, at 44.4 percent in total, according to the CDC. It's followed by Arkansas, 37.5 percent; and Georgia, 37.3 percent.

One teenager, **Hunter Lussi**, is out to change all that. He's gone from a chubby kid to triathlete - gracing the cover of "Sports Illustrated Kids."

"My mission is to get America up off the couch and in to being physically active," says Lussi. "If I can go from being a chubby kid to where I am now, anyone can do this. It is all a matter of getting motivated and taking the first steps."

Lussi is challenging people to get involved and take the state of their physical health in to their own hands by forming the largest group ever to run a triathlon this coming Labor Day. His goal of getting America fit plays out in the form of motivation, inspiration and information on his website, **America's Tri for Health**. He is calling on people across the country, both youths and adults, to participate in the triathlon.

As young people like Lussi take matters in to their own hands and awareness is being raised with the First Lady's initiative, what can schools do to help improve the epidemic of childhood obesity?