The Sugar-Free Challenge.....A Call to Action

By Dr. Ramona Warren

Recently, our office invited the community to the local theater to view the movie *Fed Up*, and we had an overwhelming response. The theater was filled with people who are interested in learning more about one of the greatest epidemics this country has ever faced: obesity. At the root of this epidemic is one major culprit -- SUGAR. The movie was very clear on how the food industry uses this addictive substance to get us to buy their food products so they can make more money.

Most of us are aware that candy, cookies, cakes and other desserts are filled with sugar, but what the food industry doesn't want us to know is there are many hidden sugars in most of the food products found in the grocery stores. Since most people have a busy lifestyle and don't cook much, they have become dependent on what the food industry offers and are unaware of how unhealthy that food really is. The quest for the almighty dollar is costing each of us in ways we don't even realize and people are fed up! After witnessing the tremendous movie turn out, I felt the need to follow up with a call to action on how we can each make a difference in our own lives, as well as in the greater community.

Americans spend over 50 percent more than other developed countries on healthcare. In 2012, the United States increased healthcare spending to $2.8 trillion – an increase of almost 4 percent. You would think with this amount of spending, we would be the healthiest country in the world! Yet our health continues to decline while rates of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other degenerative diseases continue to rise along with the rates of obesity. We are suffering as a nation, and our children are suffering the most.

Many studies have clearly shown the negative impact of sugar on our health. At the end of the movie *Fed Up*, viewers are encouraged to take the Sugar-Free Challenge by removing sodas, other beverages and foods with added sugar from their diets and, instead, eat real, fresh whole foods. This also includes removing all artificial sugars and sugar substitutes. Artificial sugars actually slow your metabolism, and make you crave more and eat more. Read labels to look for hidden sugars, and you will be surprised at how prevalent sugar is – even in foods you wouldn’t consider sweet. People should also avoid food made with flour products, which turn to sugar in the body.

Removing sugar from our diets can be difficult since it is so addictive and the food giants have made it a struggle to find healthy food on the grocery store shelves or in the fast food restaurants. It might seem like a losing battle but, much like David went up against Goliath and won, I believe each of us can overcome food industry tactics. It took one little stone for David to kill Goliath, and if we simply eliminate sugar from our diets we can improve the healthcare of America and help reverse the obesity epidemic. The future of our children and nation's health depends on each of us getting the sugar out.

We all need to take action in our own homes, the schools, where we work and in our communities. In order to improve our health and the health of those around us, we need to become better informed of the poor quality food products we are consuming. By joining forces and helping each other, we can be successful.

At Pathways To Healing we work with people every day to assist them in this challenge by offering specific cleanse programs that help reduce cravings and restore balance to the body. Having once been a sugar addict that suffered with weight and health issues, I personally know how much better you can feel and how your health can improve when you get the sugar out.