

THE KID'S FOOD REVOLUTION

A DIETITIAN-LED MOVEMENT TO IMPROVE THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

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Background

The increasing prevalence of obesity and intractable nature of the disease highlight the requirement to urgently address the etiology, which is unequivocally linked to food environments. Unhealthy foods are commonly gifted to children and available as rewards across community settings; some examples of those gifted to the authors' young child are presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1: examples of food rewards gifted to the authors' young child

Aims & Objectives

The aim of the project is to improve the food environment for children and concurrently promote the local food system. The objective is to reduce the quantity of nutrient-poor foods gifted to children across the community by creating a group social identity; whereby a locally designed sticker was awarded to signify participation, presented in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2: The award sticker given to participating organisations

Research Design

The Kids Food Revolution (KFR) was founded within the community in Clonakilty, West Cork, through unstructured interview with community stakeholders, conducted by Registered Dietitian Melissa Byrne and Chef Gillian Hegarty, focused on children's right to health, the injustice of the food system, and the community-wide effort to improve the food environment.

Results

17 schools (combined enrolment of approximately 2000 children), 10 preschools, 17 sports clubs and 33 other organisations engaged with the project and removed nutrient poor foods from their gifts or rewards to children. An award ceremony was held, which included Minister of State Christopher O'Sullivan, Adjunct Professor Darina Allen, Scientific Officer of SafeFood Charmaine McGowan, and local GP Emma Tobin; see Figure 3 below. Elements of the project have been adopted by dietitians in other communities.



Figure 3: Panellists at the KFR Award & Launch Ceremony, L-R GP Emma Tobin, Adjunct Professor Darina Allen, Chef Gillian Hegarty, Dietitian Melissa Byrne, Dr Charmain McGowan, Minister Christopher O'Sullivan

Conclusions

The KFR has directly improved the local food environment. The strong community buy-in has shown that there is widespread interest and public support for food environment reform. Despite the success of the project, overwhelming evidence suggests that a whole systems approach supported by regulation of unhealthy foods is needed to impact obesity rates.