

## COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE BUSINESS REVIEW



Melody Acosta, a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified specialist in pediatric nutrition at MCMC, stands among some of the colorful toys given to young patients to encourage active play. Contributed photo/MCMC

# Toys enhance kids' nutrition therapy at MCMC

TOM PETERSON  
The Dalles Chronicle

Colorful toys to encourage active play, such as hacky sacks, hopping balls, and jump ropes, have been distributed to young patients at Mid-Columbia Medical Center—much to their delight.

The purchase of the toys was made possible by a grant that Mid-Columbia Health Foundation received from the Juan Young Trust to help combat childhood obesity.

“Every child who recently came in for nutrition therapy has been given something fun to take home,” said Melody Acosta, a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified specialist in pediatric nutrition at MCMC. “And bigger toys have been reserved for kids who follow through with their goals. The patients have been loving their surprise toys!”

When a child is identified by their doctor as overweight, the child may be referred to MCMC for outpatient medical nutrition therapy. Through the program, registered dietitians provide the necessary support and education to help the child improve their health and eating habits.

The program, located at MCMC Water’s Edge, begins with an hour-long assessment of a child’s current habits and food intake. The entire family is invited to attend in order to understand ways to help the patient at home. The families—or the patients themselves, if they are older than eight years—are asked to make a commitment to a lifestyle change.

“It might be something as small as ‘stop drinking soda’ or ‘eat breakfast at home every day’ or ‘eat vegetables at lunch-time,’” said Acosta. “These small changes make a big difference over time.”

Shorter follow-up appointments of 15 to 30 minutes each occur between two weeks and three months, and small goals are set at each visit with a goal of decreasing the child’s body mass index percentile.

Pictured: Michelle Ochsner, Mgr., Cody Grant, Jarrett Ball, Tanner Bacci & Kimi Franks, Asst. Mgr. Not pictured: Vickie Farley, Asst. Mgr. & Tara Ibbara, Asst. Mgr.

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