



October 11, 2019

For Immediate Release

Walk Against Childhood Obesity

Some eight hundred students with teachers of St. Michaels School and members of the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition walked against Childhood Obesity today.

Walking on World Obesity Day the students bared placards that showed the ask for policy restricting the sale and marketing of sugary sweetened drinks in schools across Barbados. Signs also spoke of critical statistics like 1 in 3 children are obese or overweight, \$385 million spent on NCDs is unacceptable and 92 percent of Barbadians support having national policy to ensure healthy school environment. The walk commenced at the school on Martindale's Road proceeded along Belmont Road, on Tweedside Road and returned to the school.

St. Michaels school is one of six model schools which effective October 1st 2019, banned the sale of sugary sweetened beverages in that school environment. The model school programme is an initiative of the Childhood Obesity Prevention Programme of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB). Other schools in the model school programme include: Reynold Weekes Primary, Queens College, Rock Christian, Alexandra School and Christ Church Foundation.

The HSFB has been critical to the development of the model school programme which is working with Parent Teacher Associations in the six schools to educate parents, teachers and students on the impact unhealthy drinks and food is having on our students across the island. Evidence and research continues to show that childhood obesity is trending upwards at an alarming rate and the health of a generation at risk.

The Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition which is a collection of civil society organisations working together to advocate for policy in schools which restrict the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages in schools has become a major partner in the fight as well. Coalition members have been using their varying platforms to highlight and explain why this problem of childhood obesity cannot be exercised away or pushed to the sidelines.

The walk and the health fair which followed served as an educational platform for the students of the school to know the problem that is affecting their generation. An alarming 1 in every 3 children is overweight or obese, increasing their risk of obesity and developing a non-communicable disease (NCD) like cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adulthood. NCDs cause 8 out of 10 deaths (83%) in Barbados and it's estimated that NCD cost \$BBD 209 million per year in direct and in-direct costs.

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