

'Amazing Food Detective' helps teach kids healthy living tricks

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Riffenburgh Elementary School kindergartners, from left, Natalee Fritzler, Calista Carroll and Sair Tecca, laugh during a presentation on healthy eating Friday at the Fort Collins school. Colorado State University students partnered with Kaiser Permanente and Poudre School District to promote healthy living through the play 'The Amazing Food Detective.' / V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan

Want to be a sleuth and learn about healthy living?

Check out Kaiser Permanente's website for "The Incredible Adventures of the Amazing Food Detective" to learn more about nutrition, healthy goal setting and more at bit.ly/FoodDetective.

What does it take to get children to buy into the idea of eating vegetables, swapping out video games for some time outside and drinking more water?

Some jokes coming from the likes of an energetic sleuth, it would seem.

Kaiser Permanente has partnered with Colorado State University and Poudre School District to present "The Amazing Food Detective," a free educational performance that teaches viewers about eating well and leading active lives. The play formerly toured in Southern California and later the Denver-area, stepping foot for the first time this year in Poudre and Thompson school district schools.

"Theater is a methodology that can drop learning from the head to the heart," said Curtis Robbins, manager of Kaiser Permanente's youth health and education theater programs.

Six or seven years ago, the nonprofit health company wanted to find a way to address youth obesity, Robbins said. Thus was born "The Amazing Food Detective," the story of a young soccer player named Carlos who falls asleep during halftime, unable to re-energize and take on the opposing team.

Unsure of what to do, his teammate, Angela, gets help from The Amazing Food Detective, a loud and eccentric man with striped pants and a childlike sense of humor.

The local cast is made up of five students from CSU, directed by Amy Scholl, an adjunct professor in the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance. Crew members — Emma Schenkenberger, Tony Vessels, Seth Klusmire, Jessie Howard and Reece Albrecht — travel from school to school each Friday to perform.

In the audience last week were youngsters at Riffenburgh Elementary School, home of the Roadrunners.

In the front row, a group of kindergartners sat cross-legged and smiling as they watched The Amazing Food Detective (Klusmire) discover Carlos' (played by Vessels) need for water, not soda, a balanced lunch and dinner, no sugary cereal or doughnuts, fewer hours in front of computer and video game screens and more time being active.

At one point, actors had dozens of children singing along to a Carlos-provided beat: "One to the two to

the three, four, five, fruits and veggies, you gotta have five.”