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## Let's Move!

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# HEALTHY CHOICES

*Childhood obesity rates have skyrocketed.*



*An epidemic of diabetes is looming.*

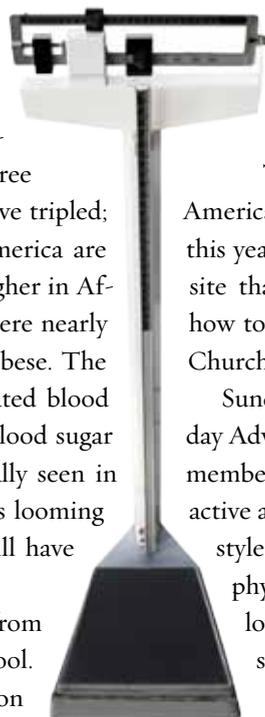
## Let's Move!

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

**W**e know more than ever before about the benefits of nutrition, fitness and a healthy lifestyle. And yet, sadly, we seem unable to implement what we already know. Education is not our desperate need. It is motivation to make lasting behavioral changes. While fitness equipment is readily available—and biking and hiking trails multiply across the country—the national statistics for fitness are not encouraging; and the level of fatness is increasing at an alarming rate, especially among children. The children of this nation are increasingly at risk of health problems, and chronic diseases are showing up in a younger and younger age group.

Because of this, Michelle Obama, America's First lady, stepped into the arena. On February 9, 2010, she launched the "Let's Move!" initiative dedicated to solving the huge challenge of childhood obesity. During the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled; and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities where nearly 40 percent of the children are overweight or obese. The consequences of this are already seen in elevated blood pressure, abnormal blood lipids and elevated blood sugar levels in young people, which are more typically seen in middle-aged adults. An epidemic of diabetes is looming on the horizon in American society, and it will have devastating results.

Three decades ago, kids walked to and from school every day and played for hours after school. Meals were home-cooked with reasonable portion sizes. Today, things have changed. Kids are bused to school, and gym classes and after-school sports have been cut out. Fast food is the norm, and kids consume hundreds of junk calories every day in snack foods. Water has been replaced by sugar-sweetened beverages, and food portion sizes have doubled and tripled. In addition, teenagers spend an average of seven to eight hours a day with



computers, video games, cell phones, the Internet and other entertainment media. Few high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity anymore.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America launched the "InStep for Life" program early this year to promote a healthy lifestyle. There is a Web site that promotes the benefits of an active life and how to start a walking/fitness program. Check out the Church's Web site at [www.instepforlife.com](http://www.instepforlife.com).

Sunday, September 25, is set aside by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as "Let's Move Day" to encourage members everywhere to seriously get more physically active and stay engaged in the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle. Those who engage in walking and other regular physical activities are rewarded with a substantially lower risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis and cognitive decline.

When people greet each other with "How are you?" the reply is usually "I'm good." When we answer that way, hopefully we are not describing ourselves like the average American who is becoming increasingly greatly stressed, out of shape, overweight and deficient in sleep.

Winston Craig, Ph.D., RD, is a professor of nutrition at Andrews University.