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Potter the Otter teaches kids to 'Re-Think Your Drink'

FIRST 5 Mendocino combines reading and nutrition

FIRST 5 Mendocino took to this spring with the message of water is best for children with the help of a friend, "Potter the Otter", an otter who loves water.

The basis of this comes from a Federal grant USDA Nutrition Network for the distribution and teaching of Potter the Otter books.

In the books Potter travels through his neighborhood caring for all his animal friends who are drinking everything from sugary juices to soda and telling them the importance of water instead.

The goal of Potter the Otter outreach is to get kids interactive in the process by reading a story instead of simply being told to drink water.

"This is a great program because we are really hitting two key areas in FIRST 5's goals for young children — literacy and nutrition," said Adrienne Binder, Nutrition & Fitness VISTA at FIRST 5 Mendocino.

"The children read the story, engage with Potter and enjoy picking out the animals so it's fun for them. Their parents can read it with them and get the nutrition aspect out of it," said Binder.

FIRST 5 Mendocino has distributed over 1,000 Potter the Otter books throughout Mendocino County through multiple community events: Head Starts; Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Rural Communities Child Care; Round Valley Indian Head Start; Round Valley State Preschool; the Young Parent Program at Ukiah High School and the CARES program for child care providers.

FIRST 5 Mendocino also plans to distribute the Potter the Otter books to all state preschools in the fall.

If interested in FIRST 5 Mendocino or more information on Potter the Otter please check out the website at www.mendochildren.org/projects/nf.htm or call 462-4453.

