

A documentary focusing on the obesity epidemic facing Americans will be shown Monday, Jan. 21, at 5:30 p.m. at the Auburn State Theater.

The Weight of the Nation will be presented by the Children's Health, Activity & Nutrition Community Engagement (CHANCE) Initiative. There is no admission charge.

The documentary runs about 60 minutes. A panel of individuals with expertise in childhood obesity will answer questions from the audience after the documentary, said Dr. Kyle Ryan. Ryan is associate professor of education and human performance lab coordinator at Peru State College.

The panel will include representatives from the City of Auburn and the medical community. Panelists are scheduled to include Ryan; Auburn Mayor Scott Kudrna; Dr. Mike Zaruba of Auburn Family Health Center, P.C. and Kevin Reiman, Auburn Public Schools superintendent. Activities will be available for children at Calvert Elementary School while their parents attend the screening. Parents may drop their children off at Calvert and pick them up after the documentary, he said.

The first 100 persons in attendance will receive a free pedometer to measure their own step count.

"We hope for a good turnout. We hope to see more parents attend. We hope it goes over well," Ryan said.

Rural childhood obesity is becoming more of an issue than in urban areas, Ryan said.

That is because of several factors, including:

- less access to recreational facilities, such as fitness centers and activity programs;
- more sedentary lifestyles, including an increase in the amount of time children spent in front of the television and the computer screen;
- mechanization of farming and
- increased access to fast foods and foods that aren't healthy for children.

Of the four HBO documentaries produced by HBO and the Institute for Medicine, it is the only one geared to childhood obesity, Ryan said.

The CHANCE Initiative is a pilot study conducted early last year at Calvert Elementary School. Second, third and fifth graders were taught about healthy living, including exercise and nutrition. The initiative was a partnership among Peru State College, Auburn Public Schools and Auburn Family Health Center, P.C. It encouraged healthier lifestyles among area children and their families by creating awareness and educating them about better choices. Members of Peru State College student groups were involved. It was developed by Ryan and Sheri Grotrian-Ryan, Peru State associate professor of business and Phi Beta Lambda sponsor. Last October, The Weight of the Nation was shown at Peru State College. The documentary has four components: health consequences of childhood obesity, effects of food marketing to children, profile of an 8-year-old and the state of school lunches.