



# THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### SWITCH OFF THOSE TVS, COMPUTERS FOR A WEEK

The Rapides Foundation is urging Central Louisiana residents to participate in the national Turnoff Week Sept. 20-26 by limiting their use of TVs, computers and video games.

Turnoff Week encourages people to engage in healthy activities and spend quality time with their families, without being sidetracked by electronics and gadgets.

“We especially want children to participate in Turnoff Week because of the increase in obesity levels in younger-aged children,” said Joe Rosier, president and chief executive officer of The Rapides Foundation. “We know this may be a difficult challenge, but we would like to encourage everyone to try to limit their screen time and instead do something to get moving.”

The Rapides Foundation’s Diet and Physical Activity Initiative endorses Turnoff Week because research shows that reduction in screen time can improve a person’s health.

In Central Louisiana, more than one third of parents report that their kids watch at least three hours of television on a typical school day, according to The Rapides Foundation’s 2005 Community Health Assessment. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents limit children’s television time to no more than two hours per day.

According to the Center for Screen-Time Awareness, screen time cuts into family time and is a leading cause of obesity in both adults and children. Excessive use of screens for recreational purposes leads to a more sedentary and solitary lifestyle and that is unhealthy for everyone, both mentally and physically.

The Turnoff Week challenge does not apply to work-related obligations. Once home, however, adults and children are encouraged to refrain from screen-time activities as much as possible. This includes text messaging, playing video games and checking e-mails from cell phones.

The Center for Screen-Time Awareness suggests alternatives to sitting in front of a screen. One suggestion is to schedule a Family Night where the entire family cooks and eats a meal together, plays board games and takes a walk outside. Other suggestions can be found on [www.screentime.org](http://www.screentime.org).

The goals of the Foundation's Diet and Physical Activity Initiative are to create or improve opportunities for adults and youth to engage in safe, accessible physical activity, and to increase the accessibility of healthy foods while reducing exposure to unhealthy foods and beverages.

To address these issues, the Foundation awarded \$455,000 in planning grants to nine Central Louisiana school districts to help them refine and improve their District Wellness Policies. In addition, districts applied for grants that, once approved, will allow them to offer evidence-based programs in schools that promote healthy eating and physical activity.