



In Geoff's Words...

Ethically-Challenged Coca-Cola Makes Effort

As previously reported, Coca-Cola's stated corporate goal is to be "...the preferred drink for any occasion...." The way they intend to achieve this goal is by being "...wherever you look...soccer field...gas station—everywhere." (1997 Annual Report.) Ethically I think it's reprehensible to promote unhealthy foods, especially to kids, and especially on the scale of Coca-Cola (see www.saveharry.com for example).

But Coca-Cola has a solution! Let no one think they don't care about all those kids they make obese and diabetic with their liquid candy concoctions. Their new campaign is called "Step With It," and it encourages kids to take a minimum of 10,000 steps a day for good health. The program will challenge about 50,000 middle-schoolers in nine cities.¹

Don't misunderstand me; I would like Step With It to succeed. What I hope is clear is that doing one thing right doesn't make any of a thousand wrongs any better.

Coca-Cola needs to correct their corporate focus. Schools are starting to wake up to their ethical responsibilities and ban soft drink sales even if it costs them \$14,000 in annual revenue (average per Los Angeles middle school²).

And don't think the students will die of thirst. LA is not planning on banning water, milk, beverages that are at least 50% fruit juice, or sports drinks with less than 42 grams of sugar per 20-ounce serving. Ironically, some of these may be Coca-Cola products. According to their website "...we offer nearly 300 brands across almost 200 countries. Many of these brands, including soft drinks, fruit juices, bottled waters and sports drinks, are only available in specific regions of the world, sometimes in just a single country. The reason for

this is simple: different people like different beverages at different times, for different reasons."³ So come on, Coke. You have more healthful products. Promote them here in the United States. Promote them to children. Do the right thing.

Diet Drinks? Forget It!

Maybe sugarless soft drinks are okay, because they arguably don't make you fat or diabetic. Unlikely. Last September a study at Texas Christian University found that even moderate amounts of aspartame (artificial sweetener used in most diet drinks), consumed regularly, interfere with long-term memory (but not short-term memory). This research needs to be confirmed, but wouldn't it be tragic if the diet sodas students drink while studying prevent them from reaping the benefits of their education?⁴

Vegetables Need Airtime, Too

Part of the tobacco industry settlement goes to purchase anti-smoking advertising. Similarly, we should tax junk food and spend that money on promoting carrots. Or kale, cabbage, chard or cantaloupe. 77% of Americans don't eat even the minimum recommended amount of fruits and vegetables daily!⁵ The public obviously needs to be educated. Kids need to be shown (on TV, so they believe it!) how essential fruits and vegetables are.

What's New



Owwie Pal is a gel-filled cold pack. Non-toxic (of course) and reusable, it has a soft backing so you don't need to wrap it in a towel. Always keep one in your freezer; they're perfect for sprains and bruises on kids and adults. \$5.95.

³ <http://www2.coca-cola.com/ourcompany/ourbrands.html>.

⁴ FDA Consumer, 36#3:2, 2002.

⁵ *Produce Consumption Not Up Much Despite Health Push*, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 9/24/02, http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/food/88248_tf224.shtml.

¹ Reuters, *Coca-Cola Starts Youth Physical Fitness Program*, 7/16/02.

² Erica Werner (AP), *L.A. School District Set to Extend Ban on Soft Drink Sales*, San Diego Union Tribune, 8/26/02.