

You may be hearing more and more about initiatives set to tackle the National health issue of childhood obesity. It seems to be heard everywhere and one of the reasons it is a problem is because youth are leading more sedentary lives. The Child Abuse Council also sees the importance of this growing epidemic and, in fact, has made a decision to hold its annual spring conference with this topic as its focus. To show my support for this effort, I want to focus part of this article on ways to get our northern community members moving. When this article goes to print, it will be during the school winter break. Go outdoors! We live in the lovely Northern Michigan and there is so much to do, whether you are athletic or not. If the weather permits, go to a local sledding hill for an afternoon to relive some wonderful childhood memories. Take your child, niece/nephew, or grandchild ice skating or snowshoeing for an afternoon. Either of these activities can burn some time, energy, and calories. Plus, you will gain some great quality time and implant a memory or two in a young one. If you are reluctant to head out to the blustery outdoors, stay inside and dig out a couple of board games or even a deck of cards. If you don't remember how to play any card games, I am sure you could look a few up on the internet. There are many indoor pools and water parks from Mackinaw City to Boyne Falls that are a fun place to spend a day. These are just a few ideas of activities that can be done to get moving in the area. It can be difficult to think about getting up and out, but once you do, it can feel so good. It is most important to instill ideas and memories in our youth, to show them that being active is fun. Another way to get moving and to lift our self-esteem and confidence is to help where help is needed. It is amazing the amount of energy you can gain when putting a smile on someone's face. During winter break, think about our elderly neighbors who may not have visitors very often. Is there anything you can do for someone? Is there anyone who you and your child can help? I bet that there is a neighbor or two whom you may have not thought of who could use some help, especially during the winter months. Maybe shovel their walk or ask if you could deliver their mail to them. Do they have a pet that needs to be walked when it is a little icy outside? Ask if you could spend some time reading to, or with, them, or play that board game! You and your child may learn a lesson or two that will last a lifetime. Other ideas are to visit your local humane society to play with and socialize the kittens. Go to one of the local care facilities and blow bubbles with a resident there who could use a good laugh! Visit, touch, and learn about the injured birds through See-North. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you are "doing." Use your imagination and don't be afraid to put your ideas to action. Go enjoy yourselves!

Submitted by Elise Tippet, LLMSW. Elise is a board member of the Child Abuse Council of Charlevoix and Emmet Counties.