

## Weighing in on Obesity

*The Biggest Loser* 13th season, entitled "No Excuses", began airing on January 3, 2012 with 20 new contestants eager for the fame and fortune of being named the biggest loser.

Since the show's debut on October 19, 2004, the series has spawned spin-offs such as *The Biggest Loser: Special Edition*, and *Losing It With Jillian*. A string of other weight loss shows have followed including *Weighing In*, *Celebrity Fit Club*, *Excess Baggage* and the new teen drama *Huge*. Canadian audiences can tune in to *X-Weighted* and *The Last 10 Pounds*.

But do these programs inspire lifestyle changes among the viewing public? And how do they measure up against the new controversial anti-obesity ad campaign sponsored by Georgia's Children Healthcare of Atlanta? The Strong4Life television and print ads (<http://strong4life.com/>) show overweight children and issue dire warnings of potential health concerns while seemingly accusing parents of failing their families.

While the reality of expanding waistlines is evident, the solution isn't al-

ways so apparent. For doctors addressing the health of their overweight patients, the term obesity has recently become politically incorrect. In a study conducted in the Philadelphia area by the Center for Weight and Eating Disorders at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine, researchers gave 390 participants a list of words relating to weight and asked them to rank them on a scale from "very undesirable" to "very desirable."

The study, conducted in part by lead author Sheri Volger, found that patients did not want doctors to use words such as "excess fat", "large size", "obesity" and "heaviness." Rather they preferred the term "weight" when discussing health concerns.

If overweight patients don't want to be approached by health providers, how do students feel about having fewer food choices in their school hallways? As of January 1, 2012, Calgary public schools revamped their use of vending machines, removing potato chips, chocolate bars and other unhealthy food choices in favor of more nutritious foods based on the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth ([http://www.healthyalberta.com/Documents/AB\\_Nutri\\_Guidelines\\_2008\(1\).pdf](http://www.healthyalberta.com/Documents/AB_Nutri_Guidelines_2008(1).pdf)).

While some applaud the decisions being made by more and more school districts, others see it only as a first step.

In a Calgary Herald article dated January 9, 2012, Colleen Parsons, director of health and fitness programs at the University of Calgary supports the new nutrition policy but hopes for further changes, including banning all vending machines from elementary schools, educating students and parents on healthy food choices and getting daily physical education programs back into schools.

With obesity on the rise, battling the bulge needs to be addressed on many fronts including in schools, doctor offices and the media.

## Juicebox TV Offers Music Videos for Tweens 24/7

Is around-the-clock access to Justin Bieber music videos really what tweens need? How about Selena Gomez tunes 24/7?

Health professionals and parents already worried about sleep deprivation among children likely won't think this kind of constant broadcasting of music videos is necessary. But thanks to the launch of Juicebox TV, a new channel devoted to 8-13 year olds, that is just what pre-teens can get.



The Canadian English specialty channel owned by Bell Media is available on more than 30 carriers around the country and can also be viewed online at [juiceboxtv.ca](http://juiceboxtv.ca).

Debuting in November 2011, the channel offers non-stop, commercial-free music videos from the likes of Justin Bieber, Cody Simpson, Selena Gomez and other teen music idols.

The videos are selected in accordance with standards set by the Canadian Broadcasters' code of ethics on violence and sexuality. They are then reviewed by a Juicebox committee comprised of 15 members including parents and Bell Media employees.

While excessively violent or sexual subjects are easy choices to cut, other music videos may contain subject matter that is potentially scary or unsettling for some but not all children. Determining which of those videos to play or pull may be more challenging for the reviewing committee.

In a *Globe and Mail* article dated January 2, 2011, Neil Staite, vice-president and general manager of music and entertainment at Bell Media, admits that the committee looks at the videos with the view of "Would I want my child watching that music video?"

Still despite the committee's reviews, and the juvenile feel of the channel's animated animal logos and graphics, not all parents may agree with what is being aired. Among the more controversial artists to come under review is singer Katy Perry who's video *California Gurls* includes some suggestive depictions.

On the other hand, some parents such as mother and Bell employee Heidi Vlahantones says in the *Globe and Mail* article that Perry's *Firework* is one of her eight-year-old daughter's favorites because it portrays moments of compassion.

Content concerns aside, do families really need a channel "you can leave on all day?" With so many screens already vying for the undivided attention of children and teens attention, a 24/7 music channel may not be Justin-fiable.

## Harry Fails to Save Box Office Sales

Even Harry Potter couldn't whip up enough magic to save box office sales from slumping in 2011. Although *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* became the third highest grossing movie ever with \$1.33 billion in ticket sales, the domestic box office fell 3.8 percent (roughly \$10.17 billion). Ticket sales, according to Box Office Mojo, dwindled about 4.7 percent, the lowest level since 1995.

Even the fourth quarter was down 5 percent in spite of what seemed like promising sequels releasing in De-

ember: *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol* and *Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked*.

Hollywood might be wondering what is behind the decline considering the unprecedented slate of family-oriented films offered during the 2011 Thanksgiving/Christmas season. Though aimed at different age groups, films such as *Adventures of Tintin*, *Arthur Christmas*, *War Horse* and *We Bought a Zoo* presented family movie goers with more options than they have seen in recent years.

Part of the problem may be simple economics. The price of going to a movie, like many other commodities, is on the rise. The release of more 3D movies comes at an increased cost for viewers who have to pay extra premiums to cover the cost of 3D glasses. And while some cinemas are becoming more conscious about the nutritional value of their popcorn, the cost for a bag of the theatre favorite is not going down.

With the growing popularity of home theatres, online streaming and DVD rental services like Netflix, audiences also have more options for watching movies at home. Waiting a few extra weeks to see a movie (at a much reduced cost) is becoming a practical choice for many cash-strapped viewers.

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To make comments or suggestions please contact Kerry Bennett - Newsletter Editor [kerry@parentpreviews.com](mailto:kerry@parentpreviews.com).