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First lady looks for 'big splash' from visit to Watertown

9/13/2013

WATERTOWN -- Calling water "the original energy drink," First Lady Michelle Obama visited Wisconsin Thursday to boost a nationwide campaign on the benefits of drinking water.

"This isn't just a drop in the bucket; we want to make a big splash," the first lady joked during her visit to Watertown High School in Jefferson County. The White House chose Watertown, located between Milwaukee and Madison, to highlight the concept that "every town could be a water town."

The "Drink Up!" campaign will be launched on an estimated 1 billion billboards and city buses, half a billion water bottles and in messages estimated to reach 140 million social media users.

More information

- [See a transcript of Obama's remarks](#)

Watertown Mayor John David said the first lady could not have chosen a more appropriate place to launch the campaign, noting that the community is the site of the nation's first kindergarten and was twice designated as having the best drinking water in the state of Wisconsin, most recently in 2010. It is also the home of bottling companies, including Wis-Pak, Inc., which bottles Pepsi-Cola products; and Klarbrunn bottled water.

Obama focused on the health aspects of drinking water and noted that bottled water companies, as well as those who make water filters, will be adding promotional stickers that tie in with her campaign.

"We are going to keep building this coalition," Obama said. "We're going to keep reaching out to new people and to new organizations and making the case for healthy choices like water, but also fruits and vegetables, which is -- you know me best for my fruits and vegetables, but you're going to know me for water as well."

Municipalities are also expected to promote drinking tap water to residents, as well as companies like Globaltap. and Smart Tap, Inc., which provide public drinking fountains across the country.

Accompanying the first lady was actress Eva Longoria -- a soap opera and "Desperate Housewives" star. Longoria joined the students and faculty with the first lady in the gym afterward for water-related games and promotions.

Lawrence Soler, president and CEO of Partnership for a Healthier America, told the audience that the initiative "brings together intense competitors in support of what is one of the single, healthiest easiest things each of us can do every day -- drink more water."

"Let's be clear," Soler said. "We aren't asking you to stop drinking anything -- we're just asking you to drink more water."

PHA is a Washington, D.C.-based organization formed in 2010 in conjunction with the first lady's "Let's Move" campaign.

He said the Drink Up! campaign will reflect a combined \$1 million of donated services by businesses, nonprofits, and media and television networks, who will donate advertising space and creative talent.

As students filed out of the gym, clutching complimentary water bottles, it appeared Obama was preaching to the choir.

"We're sports players; we drink water all the time," said Ashley Oiler and Savannah Lenius, both 17.

"Oh yeah, I drink about three-fourths of a gallon a day," said Kiah Zechzer, 13. She said she thought she heard a message that "soda isn't that healthy for you" and said she agrees.

But Mitch Van Ert, 17, said he now "only drinks a little bit" of water. "Not as much as I probably should."

-- *By Kay Nolan*
For WisBusiness.com