

THE REGION



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

Michelle Obama hugs Charlotte Bell, 10, who passed along her unemployed father's résumé. More photos at [washingtonpost.com/local](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local).

Obama fields questions, and a pitch, from kids

BY ZACH C. COHEN

First lady Michelle Obama acknowledged Thursday that the children of White House workers pay a price for all their parents do to help the president.

"We know how much you guys sacrifice because your parents work here," Obama said. "You know, for many of you, I know it's hard when your mom and dad [say:] 'You know, I'm going to miss dinner tonight because I have to work late,' or 'There's a meeting on Saturday, so I'll miss your game,' or 'I have to travel next week, and I might not be able to get to that recital.'"

"Our kids go through it," she

added, "and it's not a lot of fun."

On Thursday, Obama tried to bring a little of the fun back by hosting about 150 children of White House staffers at the annual Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.

Before the event began, many of the kids gathered in the East Room could be heard chatting excitedly. Some became engrossed in rock-paper-scissors. Then a White House staffer moved to the front of the room, and everything seemed to come to a halt. All eyes moved to the entrance as the first lady was introduced.

Obama took the opportunity to pitch her "Let's Move" campaign,

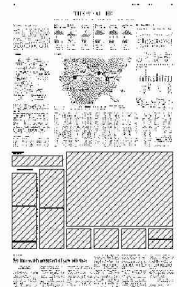
telling kids to exercise and "eat your vegetables."

Those assembled didn't necessarily agree.

When Obama said her favorite food was veggie pizza, there was an audible "ew." And when she suggested that they do their homework, there was open revolt as groans and boos filled the room.

Obama said she started "Let's Move" after struggling to feed her children more-nutritious food. As much as she wanted to give them chicken nuggets and pizza, Obama said they were much healthier after they exercised more and dropped sugary drinks from their diets. She said she worried about the long-term implications of unhealthy eating.

"I didn't want that for my kid, and I certainly didn't want that for any kids in this country," Obama



said.

A few members of the media had brought their children to work, some of whom were carrying Associated Press steno pads and iPhones. One photographer's daughter wore her dad's camera around her neck. (Unfortunately, she won't get a credit line today, he jokingly told another journalist on the way out.)

But it was the children of White House staffers who actually played members of the press corps, peppering Obama with questions:

"What's your favorite color?"

"Purple," Obama said. When the questioner said his mother shared the same taste, the first lady responded, "We're sisters in colorhood."

"What's your favorite place to travel to?" one girl asked.

"Rome is a beautiful city" was Obama's first answer, saying her trip to visit Pope Francis also included great food. China also made the list.

"Do you enjoy planting in your garden?" another kid asked.

One 10-year-old girl approached the first lady and asked for help. "My dad's been out of a job for three years, and I wanted to give you his résumé," said Charlotte Bell.

"Oh my goodness," Obama said as she hugged the girl, folded résumé in hand. "It's a little private, but she's doing something for her dad," the first lady said.

The Associated Press said that Charlotte's father, Ben Bell, has been looking for a policy job for more than two years and recently has been trying to get a job with the Obama administration. He worked on the the president's campaign in 2012.

The first lady's job also was a topic of discussion.

Obama said she likes being able "to have an effect on issues that really matter." But she admitted that she and the president dream about going out for ice cream without a security detail.

"Sometimes I miss being able to walk out the front door and going wherever I want to, whenever I

want to," Obama said.

"Sometimes I miss walking around where nobody even cares whether you're there."

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