

# Success Stories

INNOVATIVE AND INSPIRING SOLUTIONS THAT IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN SCHOOLS AROUND THE COUNTRY

## Vol. 14

APRIL 30, 2008

*As part of its Healthy Schools Program, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation celebrates the efforts and achievements of its members.*



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### Success Story No. 1

## A "Change" in the Right Direction

KNOTT COUNTY SCHOOLS  
HINDMAN, KENTUCKY

**Knott County Schools, located in the Eastern Kentucky coalfields, does not let the lack of certified PE instructors keep their students from being active. Physical activity leaders, known as "change coordinators," enable Knott County students to engage in games, exercise and physical activity time that might otherwise be unavailable. The coordinators assist the certified PE instructors and classroom instructors in the K-8 school by scheduling activities and using available space such as the cafeteria, gym, playground and classrooms. The "change coordinator" positions are made possible by a grant from the Save the Children Federation.**

"The 'change coordinators' have enabled us to fill a gap and give our students the activity they need both during the day and after school," said Helen Ritchie, food service nutrition specialist. "The 'change coordinators' have a heart for fitness, take their tasks seriously, and make sure the students have a variety of safe, fun and challenging activities to participate in."

Kim King, Knott County superintendent, is enthusiastic about providing a healthy school environment for her students and is always looking for ways to provide them with new opportunities.



Teresa Pratt is one of the "change coordinators" at Hindman Elementary and works 6 hours a day, 5 days a week to bring a variety of fun activities to keep her students engaged. "The most positive thing we can do for them is keep these exuberant kids moving. I try to give them something that they can take home and play," Teresa said.

### BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE:



## Success Story No. 2

# Just One More

SPARTA MIDDLE SCHOOL  
SPARTA, NEW JERSEY

**The “Just One More” campaign at Sparta Middle School asks students to take a pledge to make a few very simple, healthier choices. It was Phil Cocilovo, a 6th grade social studies teacher and school wellness council member, who thought of the slogan when their school wellness council met to discuss ways to raise the students’ awareness of the council, and how even small changes in their lifestyle could produce healthy results. From this, the idea that students and staff could include “Just One More” serving of fruit, vegetables or whole grains, one more 8-oz. glass of water or one more physical activity came to be.**

By way of announcements during lunch periods, the word spread to the students about the “Just One More” pledge. Students reacted by signing up to participate on a big poster board that hangs in the cafeteria. Their names are on display for all to see, which works to reinforce the students’ commitment to their own health. This reinforcement has inspired the entire student body as well as school staff.

During the daily morning announcements everyone is reminded of which “Just One More” to include for that day. Participants also pledge to get at least 30-60 extra minutes of sleep at least one night a week.

The “Just One More” pledge is “a totally optional program that has really taken off. Students and staff alike are more aware of wellness and how easy it is to make a few choices that will lead to a healthier lifestyle,” said Brad Davis, assistant principal at Sparta.

## Success Story No. 3

# Kick-Off Inspires North Carolina to Kick Out Sugary Snacks and Kick Off Walking

PHILIPS MIDDLE SCHOOL & HALIFAX COUNTY SCHOOLS  
BATTLEBORO, NC & HALIFAX COUNTY, NC

**In Halifax County, staff meetings have received a healthy makeover. By attending the Healthy School’s Program Kick-Off in Little Rock, this school district realized that meetings do not have to offer sugar filled foods. There are healthier options to serve and offering physical activity breaks can be a fun way to get the energy back into a room during a long meeting. The district has encouraged staff to incorporate the healthier snacks and physical activity breaks into all of their meetings. These changes were also made within weeks of joining the Healthy Schools Program.**

Meanwhile, in neighboring Edgecomb County, it did not take long for the Healthy Schools Program’s message of creating healthier environments for students and staff to sink in for PE teacher Jason Miller. Just two weeks after his eastern North Carolina school in Battleboro joined the program, Jason had already been to Little Rock and back to attend the Healthy Schools Program Kick-Off event and was launching a new walking program at Philips Middle School.



He agreed that students needed more than they were getting to really address the childhood obesity problem. Jason also incorporated nutrition education into the walking program, allowing the students to share healthy, organic and low fat foods three days a week after completing the walking session. Jason talks to the students about what is in the foods they are eating and the importance of eating healthy foods. The walking club began with just 10 students and has quickly grown to more than 30. One student said, “I enjoy the walking club because I can get in better shape along with my friends and people who share a similar goal.” Students have also encouraged parents and teachers to join the walking club. It looks like North Carolina schools are really jumping on board!

## Success Story No. 4

# Playground Goes Up, Disciplinary Issues Come Down

BELL AVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
YEADON, PA

**When Principal David Laver came to Bell Ave Elementary School he noticed a few things that he wanted to improve. On the top of his list was to provide a safe place for the students and the community to play and be active. "When I got to Bell in September 2005, I was appalled that there was no playground. Kids had a hard time playing with each other in ways that were appropriate. I took it upon myself to start a fundraising campaign," said Principal Laver.**

"We joined the Healthy Schools Program at the end of my first year. The Alliance helped us not only by providing a mini-grant, but also by increasing our motivation to keep us going when we saw how much money it would really take. We also were put in touch with Kaboom! who worked with the Alliance in 2006; we used the Kaboom! Web site to guide us through this whole process."



For the last two years Principal Laver has focused on raising money. With the help of the increased awareness in the community about the importance of physical activity, and the Alliance's support and resources the school was able to raise almost \$30,000. The school cut the ribbon on their

new playground earlier this year. Principal Laver said that there has been a noticeable decrease in disciplinary issues since the playground opened.

Principal Laver adds that now they are busy raising additional funding for a walking track which they hope to complete in the next school year.

## Success Story No. 5

# SWCC Keeps Active Indoors

SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CAMPUS  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

### "Recess will be indoors today!"

This announcement is heard often in a Michigan school where inclement weather prevents students from going outside for recess. The 20–30 minutes of recess students have is often the only time many have for the physical activity necessary to maintain a healthy mind and body. However, many schools turn to DVD's, board games and building blocks when outdoor play is not an option.

Not at the Southwest Community Campus (SWCC), a K-8 school, where an indoor, twelve-station fitness trail is their alternative to the indoor recess dilemma.

In 2007, the Grand Rapids Public School was awarded a mini-grant from the Healthy Schools Program to help kids stay active when they have to stay indoors.

Art teacher Karen Williams used the grant to develop the fitness trail in the school's spacious three-story building. The trail is similar to those found on nature trails in parks. It uses all three floors and provides opportunities for stretching, endurance, balance and strength. Each station has an 18" x 24" acrylic covered sign, printed in the school's colors of black and red. All panels begin with a little fitness education, display a picture of a student doing the exercise, describe the activity, and direct the participant to the next location. It is Karen's hope that students and staff will take advantage of the SWCC Fitness Trail on those nasty weather days...or just as a break during the school day.



# Featured Resource

## NC HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit

**The North Carolina HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit is a comprehensive collection of guidelines and ready-to-use materials to organize a worksite wellness committee and implement worksite wellness programs. The Toolkit is comprised of five workbooks—one on starting or enhancing an effective wellness committee, and four resource books that address the main aspects of a healthy lifestyle: healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco cessation and stress management.**

Based on CDC guidelines, the sections in this toolkit align almost identically with the Alliance recognition levels for school employee wellness. Each segment provides a rationale, tools that can be reproduced and used immediately and samples of how each should look when complete. The North Carolina HealthSmart Worksite Wellness team is willing to work with Alliance schools in and outside of North Carolina.



To access the toolkit and other resources to help your school address school employee wellness please visit the Healthy Schools Builder's searchable resource database under "Step 4: Identify Resources" or go to <http://www.healthiergeneration.org/HealthySchoolBuilder/Community/Default.aspx>

Go to the blue resources box, click on Toolkits and look under School Employee Wellness. For more tips on using The North Carolina HealthSmart Worksite Wellness Toolkit and other School Employee Wellness resources, e-mail: [ellen.essick@healthiergeneration.org](mailto:ellen.essick@healthiergeneration.org).

### Success Story No. 6

## King Sized Changes for King Academy

KING ACADEMY  
MT. CLEMENS, MI

**Principal Sharon Gryzenia and her School Health Team have been very busy making some dramatic changes at King Academy, where more than 90 percent of the students are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches.**

Some of the innovative strategies to create a healthier school environment include:

- Changes to the breakfast program—sugary cereals, sticky cinnamon buns and pop tarts were replaced with low sugar cereals, and low-fat cheese and yogurt. The school has also increased servings of whole grains. It did not take long before Principal Gryzenia and the staff concluded these menu changes had a dramatic impact on students' behavior.
- Staff has been trained to implement the "Trouble Free Playground," a program designed to help schools make recess a fun and enjoyable learning experience for every child, every day. The program provides schools with practical steps to solving the problems associated with recess in the elementary school.
- The most recent initiative is a "Challenge Hike" to encourage physically active lifestyles for a lifetime. Students and staff log their steps each day using pedometers. Teachers incorporate the program into their lesson plans such as tracking mileage with the math curriculum.
- Upcoming plans include reaching out to educate parents, inviting them to participate on the school wellness council, and offering evening health education programs including sampling healthy recipes and tips on how to be more active.

King Academy believes the combination of these healthy school initiatives has contributed to a significant increase in state-wide assessment test scores in most grades. After 5 years the school has seen students reading scores jump from around 35 percent to nearly 80 percent and math scores are now more than 90 percent, far surpassing the average scores for schools with similar demographics.

## Blue Island Bulge Battle

VETERANS MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL  
BLUE ISLAND, IL

*This story was originally printed in the South Town Star on April 13, 2008, written by Anna Tesaro.*

**Got fitness? This phrase has been on the minds and T-shirts of many students and faculty all year at Veterans Memorial Middle School in Blue Island.**

Since August, 450 students have joined the fitness fight and with diet and exercise have collectively shed more than 900 pounds—953 to be exact.

Veterans gym teacher Raeann Zylman worked with fellow teachers to turn the school year into a fitness challenge after her 2006 trip to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation forum in Arkansas.

Zylman and co-workers at Veterans ramped up physical education curriculums to encourage students to achieve healthy weights. “We were careful with it, because we didn’t want to stress it and make it a big issue for kids,” Zylman said. “We had 150 students overweight and thought we had a problem.”

**“EVERYONE IS REALIZING WE HAVE A PROBLEM AND WE’RE TRYING TO CHANGE”**

Students interested in losing weight and eating healthier have the option of joining the PUSH Crew - Patriots Understanding Student Health—which meets twice a week for an hour after school. Gym classes now include obstacle courses, sit-up and push-up competitions, stationary bikes, video exercising with Nintendo Wii and walking laps with pedometers. “We try to include everyone, not just athletes,” she said. “Now I don’t have to fight with kids to take gym. They want to go to class.”

Proper diet also is tackled during gym class; students are encouraged to try different vegetables on Tasty Tuesday. Water Wednesday reminds students to keep hydrated without drinking soda, and Fruity Friday allows students to sample different fruits as alternatives to cookies and candy.

To further the health cause, fundraisers have gone from selling candy to hosting jumpathons and selling raffle tickets, and the school no longer sells soda. “Everyone is realizing we have a problem and we’re trying to change,” Zylman said, who has lost 35 pounds since January.

Since February, students have been encouraged to walk a few miles every week, in hopes of having walked 25 miles by the time the school’s Fit For Life Day happens on May 8. “The final mile we’ll do together with all three schools, and everyone gets to run through the town together,” Zylman said.

The community also has gotten involved. Blue Island is working toward getting its first ever farmers market and Ultra Foods and Beggars Pizza donates healthy foods to the middle school. “It’s just small changes we’re making. No candy, but granola bars. No pop, but water instead,” she said. “Everyone has been so supportive.”

