

# Success Stories

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

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*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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Student at Ridge Community High School in Haines City, FL offering nutritious snacks and healthy cooking tips.

### Success Story No. 1

## Taking on a Health and Wellness Focus

RIDGE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL  
HAINES CITY, FLORIDA

**Students at Ridge Community High School are getting lots of quality physical education (PE) by taking PE for 90 minutes per day, 5 days a week during their one year of required PE. Many students join the PE Career Track or enroll in a variety of PE electives such as Fitness Issues for Adolescents.**

The staff is also moving. Staff members have been participating in a walking program all year. They walk before school, during their planning periods and after school. Bus drivers arrive early to walk the bus loop as well.

Students and staff have also started integrating lessons in healthy eating and increased physical activity across the school's curriculum. For example, an event during the school day allowed students the chance to teach their classmates and teachers about making healthy choices. Culinary arts students offered nutritious snacks and healthy cooking tips. Each student received a wellness card and recorded their weight, blood

pressure, percentage of body fat and other markers. Students were encouraged to share what they learned with their families.

Physical activity integration included creating a jump rope station where students practiced double-dutch and single jumping. Based on this positive response, the PE teachers will begin incorporating jumping rope into their lessons next year and are considering starting some intramural jump teams.

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## Success Story No. 2

# Taking Care of Yourself

ORANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

Orange Middle School (OMS) in Orange, New Jersey, has hosted three annual Sisterhood/Brotherhood Conferences during the past school year. The first two conferences focused on raising students' awareness of positive educational goals, increasing knowledge of responsible behaviors and helping students actualize respect for themselves and others. As a participant in the Healthy Schools Program, OMS used the third conference to focus on the importance of nutrition and physical activity, and was entitled "Taking Care of Yourself." The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, a foundation that supports healthcare education, funded the conference with a \$7,000 grant.

The "Taking Care of Yourself" conference was prompted by issues many students at OMS were facing with regard to their health and academic performance. Staff at OMS believed if the students were given information about nutrition and physical activity, perhaps they would be motivated to take better care of themselves, with the extra benefit of improving academic achievement.

The conference began with a workshop on nutrition, current medical concerns and consequences of student diets, specifically, high carbohydrate, high salt, and high caloric food intake such as fast food, chips, pasta, pizza and full calorie soda. Parents and guardians were also invited and had the opportunity to learn about healthier lifestyles at their children's workshop and at a session geared especially towards them.

Also featured during the conference was "P.H.A.T." - "Promoting Healthy Activities Together," which is part of the California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program, and aims to improve the nutrition and physical activity knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors of African-American students through hip-hop and other activities.

Physical activities in the afternoon were another entertaining part of the conference and included, shooting baskets and jumping rope for the American Heart Association's Jump Rope and Hoops for Heart Programs, as well as a basketball game and hip-hop sessions.

OMS served healthy food options during the conference including whole-wheat bagels with fruit spreads, low-fat cream cheese, and orange juice for breakfast; cheese,

## Success Story No. 3

# Taking a Healthy Stock of School Vending Machines

HENRY FORD II HIGH SCHOOL  
STERLING HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN

Principal Robert Monroe and Physical Education teacher Angie Pizzo at Henry Ford II High School have jumped into the Healthy Schools Program with great enthusiasm. To date, they have changed the product selection in their beverage and snack food vending machines. The snack machines are now filled with healthier options including low-fat pretzels, granola bars, fruit bars, 100% fruit chews, low-fat crackers, low-fat/high protein beef jerky and baked chips. The beverage machines have been re-stocked with low-calorie flavored waters and 100% juice. The machines are also covered with signs encouraging students to drink more water and try the new healthier options. In the ever-popular ice cream machine, the school has eliminated the high-fat, calorie-laden options and replaced them with fruit bars and smaller, lower-calorie ice cream sandwiches.

crackers and grapes for a mid-morning snack; whole-wheat pizza, made especially for the students by a local vendor and fresh smoothies for lunch. In addition, a new Whole Foods Market in a nearby community donated vanilla yogurt sundaes with fresh fruit and homemade granola for dessert along with other snack items.

### **THE "TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF" CONFERENCE WAS PROMPTED BY ISSUES MANY STUDENTS AT OMS WERE FACING WITH REGARD TO THEIR HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.**

Through the conference, OMS took advantage of a great opportunity, not only to offer healthy alternatives to students, family and staff, but to engage them all in health-related discussions and enlighten them about their health status, diets and exercise, to a point at which, perhaps, they understood the benefits and will consider incorporating healthy eating and exercise into their daily routines. The staff at OMS believes the conference made a difference not only in students' health, but also in the potential for long and productive lives.

## Continuing the Growth of Healthy Initiatives

DR. CRISP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dr. Crisp Elementary School is an inner city school, in Nashua, New Hampshire, with more than 400 students in preschool through 5th grade. The school kicked off the 2004-05 school year by declaring Dr. Crisp Elementary to be a "healthy school" promoting nutrition and fitness in a positive and educational manner and they've been growing their healthy initiatives ever since.

### Farmers Market

They now host an Annual Farmers Market where parents are able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, in support of local farmers.

### Cafeteria Changes

A salad bar was revived in the cafeteria and is used every day. The kitchen manager has increased the produce order by 30 percent.

### Team Nutrition Grant

The Wellness Team was selected as recipient of a Team Nutrition Grant to improve the school nutrition environment. They utilized the grant money to fund several projects including writing a healthy nutrition cookbook that was given to all of the families. They purchased a variety of nutrition education supplies, including books for students, learning center materials and educational posters.

### "Read the Label" Program and "One Ingredient Snack Challenge"

The school's Parent Teacher Organization sponsored a program in September called "Read the Label." This program featured songs and skits promoting healthy nutrition. As a result of this program, the Wellness Team came up with the idea of a "One Ingredient Snack Challenge." For a week, they tracked the number of students bringing in one-ingredient snacks. The students ate more than 15 different types of fruits and vegetables during this one week challenge.

### Community Involvement

Parents are kept up to date on healthy initiatives via the monthly school newsletter, which includes nutrition tips and healthy recipes. At the start of the school year, students bring home a "Healthy Snack Suggestion List," with a particular focus on healthier choices for classroom celebrations. Additionally, the Dr. Crisp Wellness Team regularly shares information and ideas with the 17 other Nashua schools. The City of Nashua School District now has a board approved wellness policy in place that fully supports the mission to promote healthy nutrition and fitness.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TEAM NUTRITION INITIATIVE, VISIT [WWW.TN.FCS.MSUE.MSU.EDU/ABOUT.HTML](http://WWW.TN.FCS.MSUE.MSU.EDU/ABOUT.HTML)

## Resource

### Summer Food Keeps Students Well Year Round

As school continues to let out in the next few weeks, millions of students around the country will lose access to the nutritious school breakfasts and lunches they receive during the regular school year.

To keep students on the smart track throughout the summer you can let them know about the Summer Food Service Program! Meals are served to children and are often provided in conjunction with educational and recreational activities to keep them active and engaged as well.

If there are summer food sites in your area, you can make sure that your students don't miss out on healthy food when school is out by informing children and families about this important community resource.

You can find out where summer food sites are located in your area by contacting your state child nutrition agency or your school food service director and share the information with the families in your community.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR EACH STATE AGENCY, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT SUMMER FOOD, AND A SAMPLE OUTREACH FLYER CAN BE FOUND ON FRAC'S AFTERSCHOOL RESOURCE CENTER AT [WWW.FRAC.ORG](http://WWW.FRAC.ORG).



**TO KEEP STUDENTS ON THE SMART TRACK THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER YOU CAN LET THEM KNOW ABOUT THE SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM!**

## Student Breaks Physical Activity Barrier

BORREGO SPRINGS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BORREGO SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

**As part of the Healthy Schools Program, Borrego Springs Unified School District, located in the remote desert community in eastern San Diego County, CA, engages students, staff and parents in the learning process as part of their mission to provide a challenging and safe social environment that encourages all students to be healthy and physically active.**

One student setting an example and living by the mission is Beatriz Duran, a junior at Borrego Springs High School. She is part of the school's cross country team and surprised many when she made it to the Statewide Finals Competition in Fresno, CA. School Wellness Council members see her as a role model to many students when it comes to wellness.

What makes Beatriz's story unique is how she has evolved and who has supported her through her journey. Because of the region's natural terrain, Beatriz runs the risk of injury to her ankles due to the lack of roads conducive to cross country training. To lessen the risk, Beatriz' coach, Cathy Paredes, drives Beatriz up to the nearby town of Julian, where Beatriz trains on the town's track and trails.

Schools located in the desert also have the challenge of the weather working against them. Known for its ideal winter climate and natural beauty, Borrego Springs can also be one of the hottest regions in California. Oftentimes students train when the sun sets and temperatures are still in the 100's.

Beatriz recalls how she developed her love for running. "I always liked to run. I think it's a healthy and great sport. My father used to say that I had the ability to run. I want my father to be proud of me," she said. Beatriz lives with her extended family. Her mother lives in Mexico and her father passed away when she was six years old. For students like Beatriz in other parts of the nation, Beatriz has this message: "If you like to run, or have any sport you like, keep doing it. Don't be discouraged."

"One thing we could do as a school system if we want to build a healthier generation is to look at ways to increase the number of physical education and activity credits," says Consuela Smith, the district's superintendent. Due to the community remoteness, staff at Borrego Springs Unified School District opens the gymnasium at least once a week to encourage students to be active and stay healthier. The district is doing its part to ensure that kids have an environment where student wellness is as important as their academic success.

"We have also implemented improvements in the foods we offer to our students" said Ms. Smith. "We've introduced low-fat foods and fresh food selections, which have been popular with students too. We are working on physical fitness, and the Healthy Schools Program is one program that is guiding us as we focus more and more on staff and student wellness," added Ms. Smith.

Many educators would agree that providing healthy breakfast and lunch for students is more expensive and State commodities are not always the healthiest ingredients. The district Food Service Director, Lorenz Hilkes, looks for the most competitive prices to be able to provide fresh fruits, vegetables and other foods to the students. Three years ago, Mr. Hilkes started working toward healthier nutrition in his schools. He took out many of the canned and processed items and started to focus on fresh food and presentation. Each morning, Mr. Hilkes has schools put out a fresh fruit and vegetable display so that kids see fresh produce that is visually appealing. He holds his ingredients to high standards and has been known to send back commodities that look like they are poor quality. In the past two years, participation in the school breakfast and lunch programs has increased dramatically.



**"IF YOU LIKE TO RUN, OR  
HAVE ANY SPORT YOU LIKE,  
KEEP DOING IT. DON'T BE  
DISCOURAGED." BEATRIZ DURAN,  
JUNIOR AT BORREGO SPRINGS  
HIGH SCHOOL**

## Success Story No. 6

# Students Advocating for Cafeteria Makeovers

FREMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

**Color. Furniture. Music. What do these have to do with cafeterias in California's public high schools? A lot according to students of five local high schools in the Fremont Union High School District, which are part of the Healthy Schools Program in the San Jose, CA region.**

More than a dozen students arrived with survey findings and a message: Our school cafeteria needs a desperate makeover! Although the findings reflect the feedback of students at the five high schools, three themes were common: ambience, offerings and other improvements are needed in their cafeterias.

Included in the findings and recommendations from the survey are wired music for the cafeteria, display's of the district's wellness policy plastered on the wall as well as before and after pictures of the cafeteria.

Peter Lu, a senior and student board member of the Board of Trustees, guided students in this effort under the leadership of Erik Walukiewicz, assistant principal and advisor to the students. "It is very difficult. Open campuses are great for the kids, it gives them choices. However, when you allow students to go off campus for lunch, they'll weigh the cost and quality," said Mr. Walukiewicz. "For us, it means we need to take a look and do something about the cafeteria's ambience and food choices."

"The district sees the Intra District Council (IDC), and the Associated Student Body (ASB) as useful communication channels for district and school as well as stakeholders," said Mr. Walukiewicz. "The District asked the ASB to gather student feedback on the school wellness policy, and for ways to change the cafeteria's ambience, food and improve servings, and they graciously provided us with feedback."

Survey feedback from students included the following, "Think about how many students would buy lunch if we could market a competitive and healthy alternative to what's available outside," said one student.

"When making a master menu, put a student on the committee to serve in an advisory role," suggested a student addressing the menu options. Among the entrees and snacks recommended and student-approved are salads, pizza, wraps, grilled burgers, yogurt, baked chips and crackers.

"These students are agents of change and we'll look at how we can work with them to create a healthier school environment," said Gloria Dirkmaat, coordinator of student

support services for the district. Students were encouraged to participate in the Healthy Schools Program's online Beverage Webinar called "Communicating & Marketing Changes to Students and Staff and Solutions for Common Implementation Issues" to share their experiences during this project and learn ways to keep the movement alive.

In the coming months, students will continue working on the wellness policy to make sure it's implemented and will make the cafeteria a place they will look forward to visiting everyday.

## Success Story No. 7

# "Walking Works" for Easton Area School District Employees

EASTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

**The Easton Area School District has made a strong commitment to staff and student wellness, and several District employees attended the Healthy Schools Forum last summer. The District's latest effort, in conjunction with Capital Blue Cross, is participating in the WalkingWorks<sup>SM</sup> Program. The 12-week program, which began on March 5th, is designed to help staff set and meet their own personal walking goals. The participants use pedometers to measure daily steps and then record their activity online. The goal is to walk their way up to a healthy dose of physical activity every day. The staff can participate as a team or individually. Incentives are awarded to individuals and teams that stick with the program, reach various milestones and walk the farthest over the 12 weeks. On April 18th, the District celebrated the 6-week mark of the WalkingWorks<sup>SM</sup> Program on National Walk @ Lunch Day. Staff and students wore their sneakers and walked during extended lunch times.**

In addition to having healthier employees who can serve as role models for the District's students, a second program goal is establish an Easton Area School District Staff Scholarship to be awarded to a member or members of the graduating class of 2008. Currently, more than 325 employees are participating and more than \$1,600.00 has been donated to the scholarship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WALKINGWORKS<sup>SM</sup> PROGRAM, VISIT [WWW.BCBS.COM/INNOVATIONS/WALKINGWORKS/](http://WWW.BCBS.COM/INNOVATIONS/WALKINGWORKS/)