

Success Stories

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

Vol. 9

OCTOBER 30, 2007

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

West Babylon High School's Road to Health

WEST BABYLON HIGH SCHOOL
WEST BABYLON, NEW YORK

In its second year with the Healthy Schools Program, West Babylon High School has continued to make progress in becoming a model for other schools looking to create a healthier environment for students and staff.

The School Wellness Committee, consisting of students, staff and community members, continues to meet on a regular basis to brainstorm new goals and celebrate successes. The meetings are an integral part of the school culture, and they help everyone stay motivated and on track. The cafeteria staff brings healthy items that they have introduced to the menu to many School Wellness Committee meetings. And there is a standing agenda item that gives student committee members the opportunity to share their thoughts on what works and what needs adjustment. These contributions are invaluable when it comes to knowing what kinds of options students want in the cafeteria.

In addition to holding regular meetings, the committee distributes surveys to school staff asking for their input about how they would like to improve their personal health. For

example, recent survey results showed that the staff wanted a nutritionist to speak at the school to offer practical suggestions for adopting a healthy, balanced diet. The School Wellness Committee met this request and arranged for the session to take place during an afterschool faculty meeting so it would be easier for all staff members to participate.

The high school staff members are also making an effort to get more physical activity during the school day—some staff members have started a lunchtime walking club. West Babylon High School has found that continued success must be based on open communication, a willingness to change, and—above all—having fun.

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CHILDREN TASTE TEST IN BLUE ISLAND, ILLINOIS

Success Story No. 2

Kids Approve New Test Muffins That Meet Alliance Competitive Food Guidelines

COOK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #130
BLUE ISLAND, ILLINOIS

In October 2006, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation announced its Competitive Foods Guidelines as part of its Healthy Schools Program. The guidelines, which were developed with help from nutrition experts at the American Heart Association, aim to increase kids' access to healthier foods in schools nationwide by promoting nutrient-rich foods, fat-free and low-fat dairy products and by placing limits on calories, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and sodium.

Last spring, the Alliance conducted taste tests in three schools in the Blue Island,

Illinois School District to test students' reaction to new fruit- and vegetable-based muffins that meet the guidelines. The taste tests included 141 students in grades one through eight. Students sampled four different flavors of muffins from Have Your Cake and Eat It Too and Michel's Bakery.

There was a supervised taste-testing process, and students received detailed instructions. For example, students were asked to offer candid opinions, to avoid influencing each other through facial expression or gestures, to refrain from talking about the muffins during the testing, and to keep their written responses confidential.

The taste tests resulted in an overwhelmingly positive response to the muffins, and revealed that students are willing to eat products that meet the Alliance Competitive Foods Guidelines in school. Of the 564 samples tasted, 42 percent of the responses indicated that students "Liked the muffin a lot." Only 20 percent of the students responded "Did not like it." When asked if they would eat the muffins again, students responded "yes" to 62.5 percent of the samples. There also were many positive comments from the children, including "The muffins were perfect," "The muffins were very good," and "You know how to make good muffins."

Success Story No. 3

Healthy Innovations On Campus for Students and Staff

LABELLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LABELLE, FLORIDA

Leaders at LaBelle Elementary are making healthy changes across the whole campus. The school has a large School Wellness Council that includes administrators, the school nurse, teachers and the County Health Department. LaBelle began the Healthy Schools Program in 2006 and received a Bronze Recognition Award at the Healthy Schools Forum in August 2007.

One of the most successful innovations has been a daily exercise break at 10:00 a.m., when the school librarian plays a five-minute workout program over the school's closed circuit TV.

"THE SCHOOL INSTALLED NEW WATER FOUNTAINS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO STAY HYDRATED."

"That first day, the phones in my office started ringing as soon as the five minutes were up," said school nurse Michele Kelly. "Teachers and kids wanted to know if we could have exercise breaks every day." After the exercise breaks became part of the school's routine, students reported feeling better after getting up and moving around. Students even reported that they were better able to concentrate in class, and that they had the energy to make it through their morning classes until lunch. "Now, at 10:00 a.m., everybody gets up and does five minutes of exercise," said Nurse Kelly. "Staff in the office also exercise!"

Many students at LaBelle applied for the Nickelodeon \$5,000 "Let's Just Play Giveaway" last winter—and the school won! With the award, the school purchased a climbing wall that is now part of their playground equipment. The physical education teacher offered an afterschool fitness club for students last spring that was very successful. The school also hosted an enrichment night for parents that featured information about how to make healthy choices for themselves and their families. The school installed new water fountains to encourage students to stay hydrated.

Healthier changes have been implemented in the cafeteria too. For example, during lunch, students are served more whole grains and fruits and vegetables. Nutritious a la carte items like apples, vegetable sticks and fruit juice have also been added. Food

service staff members encourage students to try the new healthier options and teachers follow up by discussing healthy lunch choices in class.

The messages about the importance of healthy eating have changed the choices that the school staff make as well. "We've started to serve healthy snacks at our celebrations," said Nurse Kelly. "Instead of a box of doughnuts, we'll bring fresh fruit or carrot sticks." The School Wellness Council also completed a Staff Wellness Needs Assessment and created an exercise room for the staff on campus based on feedback from the assessment.

Success Story No. 4

Healthy Nutrition Week Makes an Impact on Students

SMITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Students at Smith Elementary School in downtown Huntington Beach, CA, took part in Healthy Nutrition Week, which was sponsored by the PTA and local businesses. The PTA provided donated fresh fruit for every student during recess. "The kids ate the fruit as fast as we could pass it out," said Mary Seiersen, RD, head of the Nutrition Task Force.

"People think that kids only want to eat junk food, but that's not true, and we just proved it," she said. In addition to receiving these nutritious treats, students were each given a set of Balance Bands, five colorful elastic bands to be worn on the right wrist. When students eat one serving of fruits or vegetables, they move one band to the left wrist. This was promoted as a game—and the goal was to get all five bands on the left wrist by bedtime.

Another part of Healthy Nutrition Week involved a daily lesson on the importance of eating at least five servings of fruits or vegetables each day. Amazingly, students went from consuming an average of just 1 serving a day to 3.7 servings of fruits and vegetables by the end of the week. One fifth-grader said, "I felt stronger all week. I was surprised how much only five fruits and vegetables can affect you."

Making Wellness a Priority at South Delta Elementary School

SOUTH DELTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ROLLING FORK, MISSISSIPPI

South Delta School District is the first school district in the Mississippi Delta that has all of its schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program. Although Mississippi suffers from high rates of obesity, South Delta Elementary School is making a strong effort to create an environment for students and staff where health and education go hand in hand.

Together, the South Delta Elementary School faculty, staff and student body decided that the pursuit of good health should be one of the top priorities for the 2007-2008 school year. The health problems faced by students and staff prompted the school to take a serious look at the opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating on campus. On the first day of the 2007-2008 school year, the school began implementing the School Wellness Plan, which includes the following elements:

- **Recess**—The school has provided more opportunities for students to engage in physical activity by increasing supervised outdoor play and exercise time for all students. All students in grades 3-5 now have 20 minutes of recess each day and grades pre-K-2 have 30 to 60 minutes of recess each day.
- **Physical Education**—All students, pre-K-5, attend a quality physical education and health program twice a week.
- **Promote and Support Healthier Dietary Consumption of Foods on Campus**—A qualified school dietitian, a cafeteria manager and cafeteria cooks make sure that high-quality, nutritious meals are served daily. The principal also ensures that foods and beverages offered or sold at school-sponsored events during the school day meet the school's established nutrition standards.
- **Wellness Advisory Council**—The Council includes parents, community members, a school nurse, a physical education teacher, the principal, a counselor, an extension program assistant and a cafeteria cook. The committee

meets monthly to discuss goals, share tips and challenges, and works to ensure that staff members receive professional development tools covering wellness, nutrition and physical activity issues.

- **Move to Improve**—This program encourages staff members to walk the halls for exercise after classes.
- **Jazzercise Away Pounds**—This exercise class is offered two to three days a week, and the PE teacher, principal or another staff member leads the group.
- **A Water Station**—A water station and additional water fountains were installed in every hall, and students and teachers are encouraged to drink plenty of water daily. Students and teachers have expressed appreciation for the improved access to free water during the school day.
- **Take Ten**—During long class periods, teachers provide opportunities for students to take ten minutes to stretch and participate in fun exercises led by students and teachers.
- **Extra-curricular Activities**—The school has added kickball, volleyball and pee-wee basketball teams for girls and boys to increase their physical activity opportunities during afterschool hours.
- **Monthly Newsletter**—To share tips with parents about incorporating healthy eating habits at home, a section of the monthly school newspaper is devoted to improving students' and families' nutrition and wellness.
- **Fruits and Vegetables**—Students and staff enjoy a healthy serving of a fruit or vegetable every day for a snack in the afternoons to encourage healthy eating habits. The Fruits and Vegetables program is supported through a grant from the USDA that the school has received for the last three years.
- **Jump Rope for Heart**—Students and staff participate in a jump rope day for healthy hearts. During last school year's event, over 530 students and 60 staff participated.
- **Walk to School Day**—South Delta Elementary encouraged parents who live within one mile of the school to walk to school with their child on October 3rd for National Walk to School Day.

Success Story No. 6

A School-Community Wellness Council Is Recognized for Its Good Work

WAUBUN-OGEMA-WHITE EARTH COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
WAUBUN, MINNESOTA

At Waubun-Ogema-White Earth Community Schools, health is an integral part of the culture. Recently, the Minnesota Department of Health awarded Waubun a mini-grant to support their School-Community Wellness Council (SWC). The council consists of school personnel, local tribal health leaders, community members, a school board member and parents who are all passionate about creating a healthier environment for children who live in this rural area.

The mini-grant will be used to assist with the infrastructure costs of the SWC, including marketing, printing and healthy snacks. To commemorate the award, SWC representatives attended a seminar in October 2007, to learn more about how to create and sustain an effective council.

Vicki Haugo and Gina McLaughlin-Worms, who teach at the school and are SWC leaders, are looking to grow the council's efforts. Along with other SWC leaders, they have been actively promoting their efforts to all groups in the school district, including student government, school board, staff and administrators. They are also working with leaders from the White Earth Indian community, to which many Waubun students belong. Their many successes from last year, combined with new energy, enthusiasm and council members this year, will surely keep the SWC on a successful path.



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Success Story No. 7

Award-Winning School Receives a Special Visit from the Minnesota Vikings

TWIN BLUFF MIDDLE SCHOOL
RED WING, MINNESOTA

Twin Bluff Middle School in Red Wing, Minnesota received a Bronze Recognition Award from the Healthy Schools Program at the Clinton Presidential Library this summer. As a Bronze award recipient, the school garnered local attention from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. To celebrate the school's hard work and emphasize the importance pursuing a healthy lifestyle, Vikings owner Zygi Wilf, former player Bob Lurtsema, Vikings cheerleaders and Viktor, the team mascot, all came to Twin Bluff to promote the "What Moves U" campaign.

Students learned and demonstrated football drills and also heard from the Vikings' representatives about the importance of physical activity. The cheerleaders talked about a special squad called the "Power Squad," which requires each member to pass a number of physical fitness and endurance tests. Mr. Wilf talked about his lifelong love of sports and fitness activities and how this enthusiasm has contributed to his success. Bob Lurtsema engaged the students in an informative discussion and demonstration of the power of fitness in life.

Also during the visit, AHA's marketing director, Barb Ducharme, congratulated the staff and students on their wonderful efforts to create a healthier school environment through opportunities like the Healthy Schools Program and the AHA's Hoops for Heart program. Principal Nancy Glasenapp was thrilled with the event and expressed her pride in the Twin Bluff staff, who work diligently every day to provide healthier opportunities for their students.