

Healthy Schools Program

Awards Ceremony

Summer 2007



Alliance
for a
**Healthier
Generation**

American Heart
Association




Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation
Supporting healthy schools nationwide

The schools listed here have reached an important benchmark in improving the learning and working environments of students and staff. By making significant changes in the areas of healthy eating, physical activity, and staff wellness, these schools have joined a growing movement of committed individuals and organizations that are working to combat childhood obesity and foster healthier communities.

Recipients of the 2006-2007 Healthy Schools Program Recognition Bronze-Level Award:

Bellview Middle School	Paul Revere Intermediate School
Cherry Tree Elementary School	Paul Revere Primary School
Columbia Elementary School and Columbia Middle School	Pine Hill Middle School and Overbrook High School
DeLong Middle School	Roosevelt Elementary School
Hortonville High School	Rosa Parks—Edison School
Hortonville Middle School	Samuel Everitt Elementary School
Hudson Falls High School	South Hialeah Elementary Community School
LaBelle Elementary School	Twin Bluff Middle School
Lakeshore Elementary School	Veterans Memorial Middle School
Memorial High School	W.C. Britt Elementary School
Miami Springs Middle School	Warren Harding Middle School
North High School	West Valley Central School
Overbrook High School	

Success Story 1

Bellview Middle School

PENSACOLA, FL

During its pilot year in the Healthy Schools Program, Bellview Middle School focused its efforts on increasing nutrition awareness and making changes to the existing food services program to encourage and support good nutrition habits. The school added a breakfast program, becoming the only middle school in their county to do so. Within a week, the school nurse reported an approximately 30 percent reduction in students coming to the clinic complaining of morning headaches and stomachaches.

Wellness program coordinators worked with the cafeteria manager and the school district cafeteria administrators to make positive changes in nutritional content and adopt healthier food preparation techniques (for example, more baking and less frying of foods). Although some students complained about the changes initially, they eventually adapted to the changes.

“Many of the students were enthusiastic about the changes,” said Rayeko McCartan, wellness coordinator/physical education teacher. “They said, ‘It’s about time.’”

The school offered an afterschool cooking class in which students learned to prepare healthy snacks and meals. Many students were surprised to discover that food could be tasty as well as healthy.

To get the word out about good nutrition and exercise, the school provided materials for teachers to create and implement lessons that focused on health issues, such as how to read nutrition labels. Many lessons incorporated movement and physical activity across the curriculum, including science, language arts, reading and math. Afterschool programs also included a number of clubs focused on physical activity including African Dance and Drumming, Ballroom Dance and Juggling.

“Our faculty understood that as the only pilot middle school in the program for our county this past year, we would be an example for other middle schools,” said McCartan. “We put a lot of work into our pilot year and we’re grateful that we met the criteria for recognition. Little by little, we’re making a difference.”

Success Story 2

Cherry Tree Elementary

FISHERS, IN

After attending the 2006 Alliance Healthy Schools Forum, the Wellness Committee at Cherry Tree Elementary shared some findings with the rest of the staff, including some alarming statistics about the early onset of Type 2 Diabetes in children.

As a result, the school adopted “Dial It Up and Dial It Down” as its motto, meaning that good habits such as exercise should be “dialed up” while unhealthy eating habits should be “dialed down.” The principal purchased water bottles bearing this motto for the teachers and for every student. Students received a water bottle on their birthday with a brochure about healthy choices.

The school also instituted new initiatives such as fitness breaks, revamped the snack choices at PTA movie nights to reduce portion size and eliminate soda, offered healthier choices during holiday parties, implemented a running/walking club that met during recess, and aired one-minute workouts over the PA system during the school day.

Cherry Tree Elementary also implemented a breakfast program for the first time. Gail Hill, a counselor at the school, says some of the 30 or so students who took advantage of the breakfast program each day preferred eating breakfast at a later time than they would have at home. “Not everyone likes to eat first thing in the morning,” she said.

In addition to these large-scale successes, there have been many small successes along the way. Hill remembers seeing a group of third graders intently comparing the nutritional information on the cartons of flavored milk and plain milk in the cafeteria during lunch one day, and a fourth-grader who announced that the new whole wheat buns used for sandwiches were “not so bad after all.”

Success Story 3

Columbia Elementary School and Middle School

EL MONTE, CA

According to Michael Burns, project supervisor at Columbia Elementary and Middle Schools in El Monte, Calif., parents as well as staff are engaged in the process of creating innovative programs to improve the health and well-being of the entire school community.

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, several district, family and community representatives attended an opening meeting to determine the coming year’s goals and tasks for the Wellness and Achievement Advisory Council. Several sub-committees were formed to address different areas of wellness.

After hearing from parents that their children complained about the lack of variety in the school lunch menu, parents were offered a free meal ticket to try the school fare and evaluate it. The experiment resulted in the formation of a group that will meet quarterly next year and will give parents a forum in which to share their concerns with the school’s Nutrition Services staff.

The school also conducted a Staff Wellness Survey to gauge the needs of its staff, with the goal of developing a tailored Staff Wellness program. As part of the wellness effort, staff was offered salad for lunch every day.

With fresh fruits and vegetables and low-fat milk already staples in the cafeteria, Nutrition Services decided to offer a fish entrée, such as baked fish sticks, once a week. “It was a tougher sell at first, but they’re warming up to it,” said Burns.

“We’re very excited to have been recognized, and we’re eager to share the news that our efforts have paid off,” said Corina Ulloa, nutrition education specialist for the El Monte School District. “I think this recognition will enable us to bring on board even more of our staff and parents next year in working towards the health and wellness of all of our students.”

Success Story 4

DeLong Middle School

CHIPPEWA, WI

“Our school was ahead of the game,” said Michele Wiberg, associate principal, of DeLong Middle School in Chippewa, WI Meeting the Alliance guidelines helped to bring about even more healthy changes.

DeLong Middle School has a very active staff wellness committee that meets monthly before the start of the school day to implement wellness activities for staff. One of these is a monthly staff lunch. “It’s a chance for people to talk about something other than work for a change,” said Wiberg. Another project is a staff wellness basket for each staff member filled with items tied to that staff member’s interests and hobbies, such as tickets to a hockey game, books or crafts supplies. The basket is given anonymously to one staff member at a time and then returned, at which point a new basket is tailored for the next recipient.

Last year, Wiberg wrote and received a grant to start a student “Fit Club” that targeted middle school girls. A PE teacher and another teacher at the school ran the club, which met after school for six weeks. Club members participated in a variety of different fitness activities from yoga to pilates to cycling, and learned about health and wellness from visiting speakers.

Having received a PEP grant of \$300,000, the school was able to equip its gym and fitness center with a full range of exercise equipment and was also able to pay for a staff member to supervise students. The gym opens starting at 7:15 a.m for students to use.

“We feel really good about being recognized by the Alliance,” said Wiberg. “We worked hard and made a lot of conscious decisions about what we could do to make our school healthier.”

Success Story 5

Hortonville High School

KAUKAUNA, WI

“As a progressive school, we focused on fitness and lifestyle activities (as opposed to competitive sports), eating healthy and taking care of yourself,” said Marcia Schmidt, physical education instructor at Hortonville High School in Kaukauna, WI.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the school’s Staff Wellness Committee met with the regional coordinator to evaluate the existing program. While the physical education program at the school had received recognition, the school’s intramural program was weak, with offerings limited to the use of a weight room and a cardio room that were open twice a week after school. The greatest challenge the school faced with intramurals was space, as the gymnasiums were reserved for interscholastic games and practices most afternoons. The second challenge was getting the word out that intramurals were for all students, not just the competitive athletes.

The Healthy Schools Program was the push Hortonville High School needed to jump-start their intramural program. “What I envisioned was an afterschool program in which students could enjoy fun activities such as volleyball, pickle ball and bowling,” said Schmidt.

Student intramurals began in January 2007 on Fridays after school for six-week sessions. Students formed teams and played volleyball in a round-robin tournament. Each week, more and more students participated or came to cheer on their peers. Pickle ball (a game that resembles badminton played with oversized ping-pong paddles) and bowling were added to the intramural schedule as well. Intramurals were publicized via posters and morning announcements.

The other area that needed improvement was staff wellness. Staff members were encouraged to visit the weight and cardio rooms (which also had the added benefit of motivating students to participate). The school also hosted a variety of staff wellness activities including Sunday evening badminton games, yoga and chair massages.

Next year, the school plans to build on its early successes with more offerings in both areas. “It was great to be recognized after all of our hard work,” said Schmidt.

Success Story 6

Hortonville Middle School

APPLETON, WI

In recent years, Hortonville Middle School has become a leader in physical and health education. As a result, the school decided to focus this year's efforts on two areas in which there was room for improvement: food service and staff wellness.

The Staff Wellness Committee's first order of business was to create a new school breakfast program. In February of 2007, the school started serving breakfast to 25 kids each day before the start of classes. In addition to benefiting from a nutritious breakfast, said Crystal Gorwitz, a health/physical education teacher, students enjoyed the company of the staff member who served the meal. "For some of the students, it was a treat to have someone to talk to while they ate breakfast," said Gorwitz.

In order to create a wellness program for staff, the school conducted an online survey to see what type of activities appealed to them. This led to a twice-weekly power yoga class taught by Michele Schultz, a certified power yoga instructor and mother of a sixth-grader at the school. Up to 30 staff members showed up for the 75-minute classes, including one teacher who reported that she had not exercised in years. Staff benefited from the "core" work and made gains in both strength and flexibility. They also experienced yoga's mind-body benefits. "Teachers said they looked forward to class at the end of the day, and that it was a much-needed stress reliever," said Gorwitz.

The school also did away with the practice of giving students full-size candy bars as rewards. Instead, students were rewarded with healthy foods or activities. The physical education staff had the students make summer fitness calendars to ensure that they would not forget their new health and wellness habits over the summer break.

"It was very exciting to be recognized this year," said Gorwitz. "Next year, we hope to make even more progress."

Success Story 7

Hudson Falls High School

HUDSON FALLS, NY

During the 2006-2007 school year, Hudson Falls High School implemented several programs to promote nutrition and physical activity. As a result, Hudson Falls High School successfully raised the awareness of staff and community members of the importance of overall health and wellness of students, and how it directly impacts in-classroom learning.

The school installed new vending machines in the cafeteria that are fully compliant with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Beverage Guidelines and with the New York State "Choose Sensibly" standards and they dispense only bottled water, low-fat milk and 100 percent juices, not juice drinks. "Our vending profits increased almost 25 percent over last year," said Mark E. Doody, superintendent of schools.

"The school has invested a significant amount of money in technology-based PE programs," said Doody. "We have dramatically changed the emphasis of our physical education program from an activity-based program to one that emphasizes health and wellness." Using heart rate monitors and a special software program, students are able to create personalized health and fitness plans that include recommendations for physical activity and nutrition guidelines, similar to the kind of plan a member of a health club might receive.

In addition, the school was awarded a School Health Index Incentive Grant in the amount of \$25,000 that was used to purchase 25 mountain bikes and other fitness equipment used by physical education students, after school club participants, and intramural students.

Success Story 8

LaBelle Elementary

LABELLE, FL

LaBelle Elementary School students are hearing messages about healthier food choices from a variety of sources. “We changed some of the foods available in the cafeteria to include more fruits and vegetables, and offered more low-fat choices,” said Michelle Kelly, the school nurse. “The physical education teacher asked the kids about what they ate after school and had them evaluate their classmates’ choices. At the beginning of the year, it was french fries and nachos. By the end of the year, the kids were announcing, ‘I ate a salad!’ or ‘I ate an apple!’ and are receiving positive reinforcement for their choices.”

The healthy eating message changed the behaviors of the school faculty and staff as well. “We’ve started to serve healthy snacks at our celebrations. Instead of a box of doughnuts, we’ll bring fresh fruit or carrot sticks,” said Kelly.

One of the most successful innovations has been the institution of a daily exercise break at 10:00 a.m., when the school librarian plays a five-minute audiotape of a workout program over the school’s PA system. “That first day, the phones in my office started ringing as soon as the five minutes were up. Teachers and kids wanted to know if we could do it every day,” said Kelly. Before the daily workout, the 10:00 hour was prime time for low blood sugar. The kids felt better after getting up and getting moving. They were able to concentrate better in class and had the energy to make it through until lunch. “Now, at 10:00 a.m., everybody gets up out of their seats wherever they are and does five minutes of exercise,” reported Kelly. “We even do it in the office!”

Success Story 9

Lakeshore Elementary School

EAU CLAIRE, WI

“When one moves ahead, the other doesn’t want to fall behind,” said Mary Jo Tuckwell, R.D., nutrition and management consultant at Lakeshore Elementary School in Eau Claire, WI She’s referring to the snowball effect that came from having all four schools in the Eau Claire district striving to meet Alliance guidelines at the same time. Although changes in the schools’ nutrition programs had been underway for many years, the Alliance’s national focus provided the push that was needed to take the program to the next level.

That Alliance’s national focus also gave the schools clout with beverage bottlers, some of which had been resistant to changing their traditional portion sizes and packaging. Tuckwell was able to find “grab and go” 10- to 12-ounce plastic bottles of milk, which proved more appealing to high school kids than the more familiar half-pint cardboard cartons.

It was also a challenge to find a non-fried, non-breaded fish entrée. Tuckwell was finally able to serve a four-ounce salmon filet that she piloted at one of the district’s high schools. Although the salmon filets were expensive compared to other foods (\$1.17 per portion) and many of the projected portions went unsold during their pilot offering, Tuckwell is confident that the experiment was worthwhile. “We’re learning what’s possible,” she said. “You have to introduce it.” She has since spoken to people in the fish industry to try and come up with choices that meet Alliance criteria but also make economic sense for schools.

“We’re delighted to have been recognized by the Alliance,” said Tuckwell. “We were already moving in the right direction, so it provided reinforcement for the changes we had already made.”

Success Story 10

Memorial High School

EAU CLAIRE, WI

This year, Memorial High School launched its efforts by focusing on school employee wellness. They had staff keep track of their physical activity on a weekly basis and were able to submit their tracking cards into a drawing for prizes every semester. This was so successful that Memorial High now wants to work out a similar program for students.

As a member of the Healthy Schools Program, Memorial also decided phase out candy bars at school. The entire staff and administration showed support for this choice, and found creative ways to replace that fundraising income. “It was the right thing to do,” said Mary Jo Tuckwell, recently retired Eau Claire Food Services Director.

Memorial High School’s Wellness Council also changed beverages offerings to become compliant with the Alliance School Beverage Guidelines. They now offer mostly water to students. Overall, students are being offered healthier choices in their food and beverages, and Memorial is working hard to create a healthier environment throughout the school.

Looking ahead, the school wellness council leader, Assistant Principal Sue Steffes, is hoping to put together an afterschool wellness program for girls. They are seeking best practices for implementing the program and will open it to all girls in the school.

Success Story 11

Miami Springs Middle School

MIAMI, FL

For Dr. Gail Quigley, principal of Miami Springs Middle School, the key to getting her students up and moving was finding activities that they would enjoy. Adding five aerobics classes to the physical education offerings proved to be just the ticket for girls who were reluctant to take more traditional PE classes.

After noticing that some of the students were being dropped off at school as early as 7:30 and then hanging around until their first class, Dr. Quigley instituted a walking club that met twice a week at 7:30 a.m., prior to the start of school. This group provided an opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to walk on the field for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The club regularly attracted 30 to 40 walkers, many of whom had not engaged in such activities before.

The school also offered opportunities for both students and staff to add exercise to their day in informal settings for even short amounts of time. For example, students played box ball, jumped rope, and played with hula-hoops on the patio after lunch, and the teachers secured donations to equip a mini-gym in the teachers’ workroom.

In addition, all students were given pedometers. The physical education classes devised math problems for students involving their pedometers. They also held contests and displayed photographs of the winners in the cafeteria in an effort to motivate other students.

These physical education efforts have been supported by healthy changes in the school meals program. After returning from the 2006 Healthy Schools Forum, the school renegotiated its beverage contract with Coca-Cola. As a result, all of the vending machines for students dispense bottled water only. In the cafeteria, the offerings have been modified to ensure they meet the Alliance guidelines, and snack foods for sale during lunch now include healthier options such as baked potato chips and popcorn.

“We are so excited to have won this award,” said Dr. Quigley. “Once I learned about this program, and the importance of teaching kids about health, it became a mission for me.”

Success Story 12

North High School

EAU CLAIRE, WI

“Go the Distance” was the name of the staff wellness program that North High School implemented this past year. As part of the program, staff earned “credit” for participating in physical activity. For every minute of exercise that the 58 participating staff completed, they earned one mile on the Virtual Iditarod Sled Dog Trail posted in the staff lounge. The top three finishers of the program received prizes. The biggest prize though, said Dean of Students Darrell Kluck, was that, “the program helped boost staff morale considerably.”

The school’s staff was also offered several physical activity opportunities from professionals. Coaches offered both morning and afternoon sessions of body strength & toning for staff. “There were all ages there, from people in their 20’s to people in their 60’s,” said Kluck, whose daughter is a licensed Pilates instructor, and offered staff another physical activity option. Staff has already been asking whether these sessions will be offered again in the fall!

Students at North High benefited from these new efforts as well. During the school year, a coach started a power-lifting club for boys and girls, and will look to expand that next year. This club was structured for kids who were not involved in another sport. He even involved the National Guard in that club, which supplied t-shirts.

North High was also fortunate to be a part of the national fruit and vegetable program, which offered students healthy snacks after school. “Kids were going to jobs, clubs, practices, or meets every day. They wolfed down the snacks. Having that kept a lot of them away from chips and snack machines. Some of our kids can’t afford to buy something extra, so that really helped them out.”

Success Story 13

Overbrook High School

PINE HILL, NJ

When Kathy Benton, the school nurse at Overbrook High School, started a student wellness club she didn’t have high expectations about enticing the students to show up. Despite her doubts, she distributed flyers and got the word out.

“I was really excited to see how many kids were interested in finding out about the program,” she said of the club, which meets after school to talk about health and wellness issues including nutrition, exercise and body image.

In collaboration with Diana Hammond, food services director, Benton was able to bring the school’s vending machine and a la carte cafeteria beverage offerings into compliance with Alliance Beverage Guidelines. They swapped out sodas for bottled water and other healthier choices, and launched an innovative healthy lunch program for staff. School employees choose from a menu of healthy lunch choices in the morning and select their own pick-up time. Staff reported that the service was extremely convenient and was a great alternative to the fast food outlets located near school.

In addition, the school administered a survey to staff to find out about their interests in staff wellness activities. Based upon those results, the school plans to expand upon existing staff wellness programs during the coming school year.

Success Story 14

Paul Revere Intermediate School

ALSIP, IL

“This time last year, we had no idea we’d come close to qualifying,” said Wendy Bumphis, principal of the Paul Revere Intermediate School. “It proves how even little changes can have an effect.”

Among Bumphis’ little changes was implementing “Wellness Wednesdays.” This was a way of consciously focusing on integrating physical activity throughout the school day (in addition to PE). Fitness alarms sounded randomly throughout the day, signaling everyone to stop what they were doing and perform some physical activity. “The students loved it,” said Bumphis.

As part of the Healthy Schools Program, Paul Revere Intermediate School organized a three-school walkathon in October and a marathon in May. The school also planned two successful family fitness activities: a mother-daughter volleyball tournament and a “Sons and Their Heroes” dodge ball event. The 2006-2007 school year was the first in a long time that Paul Revere was able to offer after school intramurals for students with the teachers being compensated by the district for leading the programs. Students were exposed to new types of physical activity with a walking club as well as a bowling league that met weekly in six-week increments after school at a neighborhood bowling alley. The bowling league, which was made possible by the cooperation of the bowling alley, attracted 35 to 40 kids each time it was offered.

Next year, Bumphis plans to expand on these efforts even more. “We are ecstatic about being recognized,” she said.

Success Story 15

Paul Revere Primary School

BLUE ISLAND, IL

“We really started from the bottom up last year,” said Sherri Sera, physical education teacher at Paul Revere Primary School. To get started, Paul Revere’s School Wellness Council sought the support of the local Superintendent and School Board. “They asked, ‘What can we do to help?’” Sera recalled.

After collecting height and weight information from students on campus, the School Wellness Council discovered that there was a 34 percent obesity rate among their students, more than twice as high as the 17 percent national average. This information served as a call to action for teachers and staff.

The school held five Family Fitness Nights to promote fitness and healthy eating to students and their families. One of these included a talk by a bilingual (English-Spanish) doctor from the community who specialized in childhood obesity prevention. The attendance rose with each successive event. The school also instituted before and afterschool activity programs, which were also very popular, with classes filling up within the first couple of days of registration.

Because Paul Revere Primary students have physical education classes only twice a week and recess for 10 minutes each day, the school sought to incorporate physical activity into the students’ daily lives. Teachers increasingly used activity rewards instead of food rewards and emphasized healthy eating and physical activity in all aspects of the curriculum.

“Our school’s biggest accomplishment has probably been successfully getting the majority of the faculty, students and their families to buy into the program,” said Sera. “As the year progressed, it was great to see parents start to send fruit as treats to school instead of cupcakes, for example. Winning this award is a validation of everyone’s hard work.”

Success Story 16

Pine Hill Middle School

PINE HILL, NJ

As a first step in adopting the Alliance guidelines, Pine Hill Middle School conducted an assessment of their physical fitness and nutrition programs. They determined that the food service program was most in need of change. The first change they undertook was putting the Alliance beverage guidelines in place. Next, the food service coordinator implemented one healthy change each month, either adjusting a serving size, removing an unhealthy food item, or adding a healthy option. For example, students were now offered baked French “fries.” Because the process was gradual, the students took the changes in stride.

The school also lacked a staff wellness program, so Maria Kristin Miller, a health/physical education teacher at the school, developed one to help staff stay healthy over the summer. There was an initiation fee of \$5 per meeting and the funds will be used to help promote future staff wellness initiatives.

Additional goals for the program, to be implemented in the coming year, include weekly student-led fitness club meetings and a new intramural program to serve students, many of whom come from low-income families and don't have many opportunities for outdoor play or structured activities outside of PE class.

The initial results have already been encouraging to Miller. “We're excited to be recognized this year. It was tough! I couldn't believe all of the criteria we had to meet,” she said.

Success Story 17

Roosevelt Elementary

FRESNO, CA

“You don't always realize it at the time, but gradual, tiny changes really add up,” said Mary Guardado, kitchen/cafeteria assistant at Roosevelt Elementary in Fresno, Calif.

Among the small changes that the school's food service program implemented over the past year were offering fresh fruit instead of cookies, instituting a daily salad bar with low-fat dressing, including more varieties of fruits and vegetables, and replacing highly sugared juices with water.

In collaboration with California State University - Fresno, the school began a “Harvest-of-the-Month” program spotlighting locally grown produce such as asparagus, apricots, globe grapes, strawberries and red cabbage. Because Fresno has many farms, sometimes the kids were eating fruits and vegetables that had been harvested just the day before. School hallways were decorated with posters depicting the harvest of the month. During class, students had the chance to sample the featured item in its raw form and later, in the cafeteria, as an ingredient in a prepared food.

“The kids accepted some of the offerings very well. With others, such as red cabbage, it was a challenge to make it more enticing to kids,” said Guardado. The cafeteria staff created a recipe that would appeal to the kids' taste buds by combining the cut up red cabbage with locally grown raisins, low-fat mayonnaise, walnuts and honey.

Guardado estimates that as many as half of the children did not eat fresh fruits at home, due to their high cost in comparison to cookies or other kinds of snacks. Despite their lack of familiarity with fresh fruits and vegetables, it wasn't hard to entice the students to try the new offerings. “I never heard, ‘No!’” said Guardado. “Eventually, they even started looking forward to the next month's harvest.”

Success Story 18

Rosa Parks-Edison School

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

“Changing people’s mindsets is an ongoing process,” said Roberta Sipe, health and fitness teacher at Rosa Parks-Edison School.

During the 2006-2007 school year, Rosa Parks-Edison implemented many changes in its existing food service program. In some cases, this required an educational effort as the staff tried to implement the new guidelines. One example was trying to design a salad recipe that contained the minimum caloric standard required by the Federal School Lunch Program.

Originally, the cafeteria staff was serving salad with a high-fat dressing. Sipe encouraged them to come up with a recipe that replaced the calories coming from the dressing with calories from healthier ingredients such as nuts and seeds. Vanilla-flavored milk was added to the cafeteria menu, a change that the kids enjoyed and that was also a nutritional improvement over chocolate milk. New varieties of fruits and vegetables, such as mini bananas, were added to the roster of choices. Bringing sweet foods for class birthday celebrations was discouraged in favor of healthier snacks.

In addition, the school replaced the vending machine outside of the gym area with a new one that had a graphic of active kids on the front (instead of just a beverage company logo) as well as a timer that locks the machine from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

A newly established School Wellness Council conducted a series of staff wellness activities such as weight loss meetings and physical activity competitions. “Next year, I hope to have a student representative or two on the Council and also to include more activities such as cooking and nutrition classes,” said Sipe. She also hopes to add twice daily physical activity breaks in all classrooms.

Success Story 19

Samuel Everitt Elementary

NEWTOWN, PA

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, Christine McKee, Ed.D., principal of Samuel Everitt Elementary, realized that her school’s breakfast program was in need of change and that the Healthy Schools Program could help. The school serves breakfast to approximately 80 children each day. McKee started by weeding out some of the high-calorie, high-sugar cereals.

“We started with 80 percent sweetened cereals and 20 percent healthier choices, then kept decreasing the percentage of sweetened cereals by another ten percent each week until we ran out of our supply of sweetened cereals,” McKee says. “The kids may have missed their favorites at first, but by December, they had come to enjoy the healthier cereals.” In addition, the school made an effort to serve fresh fruits, 100 percent fruit juice, whole grain breads, and non- or low-fat milk at breakfast.

The school also participated in the Governor’s challenge (a virtual “walk” around the state of Pennsylvania) with over 75 percent participation among faculty, students and families. “We applied for a small grant from the Governor’s challenge, which we used to purchase pedometers,” said McKee. A few dozen students, together with their principal, were recognized as members of a “Hundred-Mile Club” and were given official certificates downloaded from the Governor’s web site. By announcing significant progress over the PA system and at assemblies, McKee created school-wide interest in the program and engendered a sense of healthy competition among classrooms and families.

McKee notes that none of the projects required large budgets. “You just have to use a little ingenuity to get people interested and involved,” she said.

Success Story 20

South Hialeah Elementary School

HIALEAH, FL

Sara Brodsky, a fifth grade teacher at South Hialeah Elementary School in Hialeah, FL, acknowledges that her school faced significant hurdles in implementing the Alliance guidelines. “The eating habits of our students as well as our staff were not that good, and students don’t have a lot of physical education time,” she said. “Many of our students also live in neighborhoods where it’s not safe to play outside.”

The schools implemented a series of successful changes during the 2006-2007 school year. First, students and staff participated in a school-wide vote about food preferences, with posters in the halls urging them to choose particular items (“Vote for Patty Pizza!”). Food services also made an effort to serve better-balanced meals. For example, instead of offering pizza with a side of corn, they now paired pizza topped with low-fat cheese and vegetables served with a side of steamed vegetables. In addition, an effort was made to make the fresh fruits and vegetables look as tempting and appealing as possible.

A student-faculty walking club was formed and met twice weekly before the start of school. Physical activity breaks were instituted between subjects, and students took turns leading their classmates in simple calisthenics. Brodsky applied for and received a \$5,000 grant from Nickelodeon, which paid for “Let’s Go Play” tote bags for every student. These bags were filled with a Frisbee, a jump rope and other items promoting physical activity. Some of the items could even be used indoors.

“It’s been a wonderful year,” said Brodsky. “I’m so proud of our students and staff, and I’m thankful to the Alliance for all of their help in making these healthy changes.”

Success Story 21

Twin Bluff Middle School

RED WING, MN

Twin Bluff Middle School capitalized on the idea of students wanting to have “more energy” and used that as the foundation of their yearlong efforts. The school formed a Student Wellness Committee to promote awareness of eating healthy and making healthy choices and rewarded students with prizes. The committee administered a lunchroom survey to solicit student preferences, distributed weekly “Healthy Tidbits” in the student bulletin, maintained several health bulletin boards offering information on health and wellness and developed a trivia contest about healthy facts.

The school did away with the practice of distributing soda and candy as “Pride Prizes” (highly coveted awards given to students for good deeds). Instead, students were rewarded with books, healthy snacks and activities. “No one has complained,” said Jill Berghammer. The cafeteria added more fresh vegetables and whole grains, offered improved beverage choices and reduced the frequency of french fries on the menu. The traditional “candygrams” that students send to one another on holidays such as Valentine’s Day and Halloween are being phased out in favor of non-candy alternatives.

In the area of staff wellness, the school instituted on-site yoga classes and Weight Watchers meetings and brought in a Registered Dietician to speak to staff.

Berghammer recalls that the biggest challenge of instituting various wellness initiatives has been funding, especially in a district experiencing budget cuts. She notes that it was easy to solicit donations of soda and candy from local businesses because they are inexpensive compared to healthier foods. “One hundred cans of pop can cost \$20 to \$25, while 100 Honeycrisp apples and peanut butter cost over \$100,” she said. “You have to be creative, but it has been fun brainstorming!”

Success Story 22

Veterans Memorial Middle School

BLUE ISLAND, IL

Physical education and health teacher Raeann Zylman attended last year's Alliance conference with some resistance and skepticism. "I was totally against the program," she remembers. "I just wanted to continue to sell candy and treats to make money for our school. But at the conference, something just clicked. That first evening in our hotel rooms, we were already brainstorming new ideas."

Some of those ideas were realized in the form of new programs, such as a "fitness alarm." At certain times during the week, the PA system plays music and everyone gets up and stretches, wherever they are. The staff solicited donations and outfitted a fitness room to give students a place to exercise before and after school. "Not everyone is a super jock," said Zylman.

The school hosted a "Fit for Life" day that celebrated students who had walked or run 25 miles during the previous three months (like a marathon, but distance was measured cumulatively). One eighth grader who participated saw her per-mile walking speed cut in half by the end of the three months, from over 40 minutes to around 20 minutes per mile. Students, staff and community then came together to walk the last mile together wearing commemorative T-shirts. In addition, local vendors provided healthy refreshments such as smoothies.

The school also instituted "Wellness Wednesdays" during which students spent the last half hour of the school day engaged in physical activity.

Success Story 23

W.C. Britt Elementary School

LAWRENCE, GA

Britt Elementary School serves many students who can't afford the fees associated with traditional afterschool programs such as the Y.M.C.A. or private sports academies. Two years ago, Rodney Wayne, the school's health specialist, decided to give the students an alternative. The result is "Wayne's World Workout," a free, two-month long afterschool sports program that takes place at different times during the year (except during late fall, when it is sidelined due to Wayne's responsibilities as a basketball referee). "The kids hate to see it end," said Wayne.

Wayne, who is also a certified PE teacher, volunteers his time, because the program is not funded. Students learn games that are not a part of a traditional PE program, such as Ultimate Frisbee. They also learn something called "Wall Soccer," Wayne's own invention. This variation on soccer is played with 10 goalies lined up on opposite sides, each guarding a section of wall against the offensive players. "Everyone is active, everyone is participating," said Wayne. "Yes, they're exercising and they're getting in shape, but to the kids, they're just having fun."

This year, Britt Elementary invited food service staff into the classrooms, offering the students a rare chance to interact with cafeteria staff outside of the lunchroom. Students learned about the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables and about healthier ways to prepare foods (for example, baking over frying). Students also have the chance to go behind the scenes in the cafeteria to see the food being prepared.

Success Story 24

Warren Harding Middle School

PHILADELPHIA, PA

“Nutrition is tough, but we have gotten better over the course of the school year,” said Harding Middle School nurse Deborah Notte, who supported efforts to improve wellness at the school. She notes that soda has been absent from the cafeteria and vending machines for well over a year, and that the students have been given healthier snack choices in vending machines.

To stretch the budget of the school, which is in a large, urban district, Harding relied on outside resources. A Drexel University Nutritionist and Registered Dietitian visited the school five or six times during the year to talk to all the sixth grade classes about healthy food choices. The same nutritionist also comes to the school’s health fair and to parents’ night.

Last year, Notte administered an anonymous survey that asked staff about their height, weight and eating habits, as well as what types of health and wellness activities they would be interested in. As a result, the school hosted a Weight Watchers at Work meeting for staff that ran for 10 weeks. “Twenty staff members attended and lost a total of 250 pounds,” said Notte. The school also created a Walking Club for staff that met three times a week before school.

One of Notte’s goals is investing in improved physical education facilities at the school, particularly since many students live in unsafe neighborhoods. The school recently received a \$50,000 grant to outfit a gymnasium with new cardio equipment, as well as to build a soccer field and outdoor track. This coming year, they will also be able to hire staff to run after school and Saturday activity programs.

While Notte acknowledges that she’s “thrilled” with the school’s progress, as well as with having been recognized by the Alliance, she’s looking ahead to next year. “There’s so much to do, we haven’t even scraped the surface,” she said.

Success Story 25

West Valley Central School

ELLCOTTVILLE, NY

During the 2006 school year, West Valley Central School gave high priority to making healthy changes to their breakfast and lunch programs. The food services staff eliminated the one percent chocolate milk at breakfast since students were using it on their sugary cereal. The staff decided that if the number of milks being purchased decreased significantly, they would restore it as a choice. After one month’s time, however, there was no significant drop-off in the number of milks being taken. In addition, food services started offering a healthier selection of cereals.

At lunch, some of the changes on the lunch menu proved to be a little harder to swallow. Students complained about being served french fries less often. They also protested when saltshakers were removed from the cafeteria. Students were educated about portion control and overall nutrition. The staff ordered smaller containers of ranch dressing to cut down on both calories and food waste. Additional changes included no longer deep-frying foods and eliminating the use of trans fats in cooking. Food services offers more baked snack foods, more vegetables (raw as well as cooked) and a once-week tuna fish sandwich. Another popular option was a made-to-order sandwich station offering subs with lean, healthy meats and fresh vegetable toppings.

To promote the new staff wellness program, which is another area of focus, West Valley Central School hosted a Faculty/Staff Wellness Day in March 2006 to promote a healthy lifestyle. It included physical fitness activities (volleyball and basketball games in the gym), presentations by fitness professionals from local health clubs, a healthy cooking demonstration from a chef and other well-rounded wellness programs, plus a healthy lunch.

“It feels good to know that the changes we made are making a difference,” said Kyle Woodin, a health educator at the school. “The fact that the Alliance is a national organization makes us feel even more validated.”

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation would like to celebrate every school enrolled in the Healthy Schools Program for accepting the challenge and committing to creating a healthier school environment. *The stories here represent just twenty six of the many stories of our member schools. As is evidenced by these and all the untold stories, the Healthy Schools Program community is becoming a growing force in the area of school health and is positively changing the landscape around childhood obesity prevention.*

About The Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the Healthy Schools Program

The William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association partnered in May of 2005 to create a new generation of healthy Americans by addressing one of the nation's leading public health threats—childhood obesity. The Alliance is working to stop the nationwide increase in childhood obesity by 2010, and empowering kids nationwide to make healthy lifestyle choices. The Alliance is focusing its work in the places that can make a difference to a child's health: homes, schools, restaurants, doctor's offices and communities.

The Alliance launched its Healthy Schools Program in February of 2006 to support schools across the country in their development of healthier school environments. The program takes a comprehensive approach by helping schools improve access to healthier foods; increase both physical education and physical activity opportunities before, during and after the school day; enhance nutrition education; and establish staff wellness programs. The Healthy Schools Program recognizes schools that succeed in meeting a set of comprehensive standards that address these areas at the Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum levels. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the major funder of the Healthy Schools Program. Many other foundations and individuals also support the work of the Healthy Schools Program, including the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, MSST Foundation, Howard & Michele Kessler, Anne Brennan, and the Missouri Health Foundation. For more information on the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, please visit: www.HealthierGeneration.org.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

