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NEWS RELEASE

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Six Schools Win National Nutrition Awards



HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Lindsey Elementary, Northside Elementary, Pearl Stephens Elementary, Westside Elementary, Thomson Middle and Northside High have each won a national award for providing healthier school environments for their students and staff. All six schools won a Bronze Award from the William Jefferson Clinton Foundation and American Heart Association for successful implementation of the “Alliance for a Healthier Generation” program, which helps prevent childhood obesity and create healthier lifestyles. The initiative was led by school nutrition managers, administrators and physical education teachers.

Bronze-level recipients are invited to Little Rock, Arkansas to be presented the award personally by former President Bill Clinton. The Alliance pays for one representative from each award-winning school to attend the Healthy Schools Forum, which will be held at the William J. Clinton Presidential Center. The event date will be announced soon, based on Clinton’s schedule. The forum will celebrate the successes of schools and also provide further opportunities to learn ways to create healthier environments.

The program is comprised of eight categories: Before and Afterschool Programs; Competitive Foods and Beverages; Health Education; Physical Activity; Physical Education; School Meals; School Employee Wellness; and Systems & Policy. Within each category the Alliance recommends best practices that schools should implement to improve staff and student wellness. These guidelines are formed using the best evidence of scientific research and are reviewed annually by the American Heart Association and the Healthy Schools Program Expert Panel.

Meredith Potter, Houston County School System dietitian, commented, “Our schools are awesome! While each school was unique, it was encouraging to see how many of our policies and programs already aligned with the best practices suggested by the Healthy Schools Program. I am proud to work for a system that values the importance of promoting child and staff wellness.” She added, “Due to this initiative, positive changes occurred in all of the schools. These awards validate their success and that they have made a positive difference in the lives of their students and staff. ”

MORE

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Examples of school improvements include:

- School wellness councils were formed.
- Staff exercise programs were created.
- Safe biking and walking programs were implemented.
- Vending machine choices were evaluated and healthier options were included.
- Student/teacher walking clubs were started.

“I believe each school realized that the improvements did not increase their work load, but instead increased their energy and efficiency with which they did their work,” Potter remarked.

Lindsey Elementary Principal Anthony Lunceford commented, “What a great honor for Lindsey Elementary staff and students! The credit certainly goes to our lunchroom manager William “Slim” Johnson and his staff for all their hard work each day providing healthy, nutritious meals for our students. Our teachers participated as well, by having a “Biggest Loser” competition. During that time, they shared healthy eating habits, recipes and exercise, and enjoyed some friendly competition with their colleagues. We are honored to receive this award and will continue to encourage our staff and students to focus on healthy lifestyles and nutrition.”

The mission of the Alliance is to eliminate childhood obesity and to inspire all young people in the U. S. to develop lifelong, healthy habits. The goals of the Alliance’s Healthy Schools Program are to:

- increase opportunities for students to exercise and play;
- put healthy foods and beverages in vending machines and cafeterias; and
- provide resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models.

The Web site is www.healthiergeneration.org. For more information, contact Potter at Meredith.Potter@hcbe.net or (478) 322-3308, extension 10301. Adrienne Gil, Georgia Relationship Manager with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, may be contacted at (404) 835-7838.

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