



NEWS RELEASE

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Waterford School District Elementary Schools Meet the HealthierUS School Challenge

February 6, 2012, Waterford, Mich. – The Waterford School District is making national news by working to support and improve the health of children and the community. As part of the effort, healthy items are featured on menus and physical education and activity emphasized. These efforts are part of the HealthierUS School Challenge.

The HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC) is a voluntary national certification initiative for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. It supports First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign by recognizing schools that are creating healthier school environments through their promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Sponsored by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the initiative encourages all schools take a leadership role in helping students to make healthier eating and physical activity choices that will last a lifetime. Schools, such as Adams, Beaumont, Cooley, Houghton, Knudsen and Schoolcraft that champion the HUSSC work hard to make changes to their school nutrition environment in order to (1) improve the quality of the foods served, (2) provide students with nutrition education, and (3) provide students with physical education and opportunities for physical activity.

Ultimately, FNS would like to see all schools receive a HUSSC award. Schools awarded receive an award plaque signed by a USDA official, a banner to display in their school, and their name listed on the Team Nutrition Web site. Adams, Beaumont, Cooley, Houghton, Knudsen and Schoolcraft Schools qualified for the Bronze Award, which will be presented to their schools at a special ceremony.

To qualify for an award, a school must submit a formal application and meet basic criteria set forth by the FNS. The HUSSC criteria reflect the recommendations of the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published recommendations (April 2007) for foods that should be served in schools. HealthierUS Schools must also have a local school wellness policy, as mandated by Congress.

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The HUSSC application process was led by Doreen Simonds, Food and Nutrition Manager. Recognition is also due to the school principals, the Michigan Department of Education Team Nutrition staff, Physical Education teachers Jeff Stevenson, Keith Hanson, Brian Tass and Jim Petersen along with Janet Timmreck and the entire WSD nutrition staff for teaming up to meet the challenge. Special recognition is also due to Waterford Senior Center volunteer Carol Hollis for her great work at Cooley Elementary.

“There were a number of other important factors that led to our success,” stated Nutrition Manager Simonds. “Our involvement with Fuel up to Play60 and the grants we have received from UDIM have generated a great interest and involvement with our student body as well as the staff. Other grants that we attribute our success to is the Blue Cross, Blue Shield Building Healthy Communities grant, Michigan Team Nutrition Wellness and Garden grants, Action for Healthy Kids grants, Hidden Valley @Love Your Veggies grants and the Waterford Foundation grants. Without the financial and training support of these grants, the challenge would have been far greater to meet.

Along with many of the programs that the grants initiated we have been able to start our own program, Tracker the Nutrition Train featuring the MyTracker Tray, which promotes the USDA MyPlate initiative. We celebrate MyTrackerTray Day every Tuesday and students are encouraged to taste test new whole grain foods, more fresh fruits and veggies along with no fat flavored milks. This helps us to determine what new foods we can use to continually improve our menus while still keeping our menu kid friendly.”

The Waterford School District now has 13 HealthierUS Schools and will continue to work at meeting the challenge of promoting a healthier community. “On January 31, 2012 we introduced Fresh Choice Salad Bars in the WSDepot Cafés of our elementary schools. Students were very excited with the new fresh choice,” shared Simonds. “We are definitely on the right track when the favorite part of our kid’s day is picking out the veggies that will fill their plates! Our motto is ‘Train a child up in the way they should go and healthy in body and mind they will grow.’”

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