



Partners in Health

The Newsletter of the Healthy Schools > Healthy Families Coalition

Fall 2008

HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Fundraising the Healthy Way

Conventional methods of school fundraising, which often involve sugar-coated and fat-laden desserts, are counterproductive to teachers and staff who are working hard to instill healthy habits into their students. In response, Healthy Schools, Healthy Families sponsored Healthy Snack Sales in many of our schools this year. These nutrition promotion events feature a variety of healthy snack alternatives, including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and “healthy soda” (seltzer and 100% fruit juice). These snacks are sold in appropriate portion sizes to students and teachers. Healthy snacks are purchased at local supermarkets by HSHF staff and also by parents who are given a list of foods to contribute to the Healthy Snack Sales. Snacks are then packaged by the students to sell after their lunch period. Our overall goal is to expose the school

community to healthy snacking and demonstrate that healthy snacks can be delicious and are accessible in their neighborhoods.

Proceeds of the sales are donated to the PTA, kindergarten graduation, or to the 5th grade graduation fund to discourage the sale of baked goods for fundraising or may support funding for the next Healthy Snack Sale. One 5th grade teacher at PS 152 created a lesson plan for her classes’ Healthy Snack Sale experience. Students learned the basics of managing a business through assigning students specific roles such as food preparation, marketing, math skills, and customer relations. A PS 102 kindergarten teacher commented on the success of the program after seeing one of her young students attempting to buy additional whole grain crackers and low fat cheese with fake money from the classroom’s toy chest!

School Buy-In and Sustainability

HSHF strives to get school staff and parents to take an active role in improving the health of their schools, ensuring program sustainability and maximum reach. This objective was more important than ever in the 2007-2008 school year as HSHF moved to a more efficient staffing model. It was inspiring to see the school staff step up to the plate. Ms. Lee, a Pre-K teacher at PS/IS 180, took the lead in coordinating CookShop Classroom at her school. Ms. Martinez, a Science teacher at PS 152, took the lead in organizing school supply fundraisers in substitute of bake sales.

Perhaps the best example of school buy-in was by the principal at PS/IS 180, Dr. Peter L. McFarlane.

Despite the restrictive school budgets, Dr. McFarlane hired the HSHF Program Coordinator at PS/IS 180 as his school’s SAPIS Counselor, allotting 50% of her time to HSHF related task and the other 50% to fulfill Department of Education requirements of SAPIS workers.

Another notable HSHF Healthy Environment initiative was the school-wide environmental assessments conducted by Asthma Free School Zone to detect asthma triggers.


**Komansky Center
for Children’s Health**

┌ New York-Presbyterian Hospital
└ Weill Cornell Medical Center




**Morgan Stanley
Children’s Hospital
of New York-Presbyterian**
Columbia University Medical Center

PARTNERSHIP LIST

HSHF exemplifies partnerships working collaboratively to serve the community. Internally Community Pediatrics/ Department of Columbia University Medical Center, Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian, Weill Cornell Medical College, and New York-Presbyterian Ambulatory Care Network all collaborate to provide leadership and resources to this program. In addition we have several community partners, as indicated below:

Affinity Health Plans:

Funds the salaries of the three, full-time HSHF Family Care Workers.

Asthma Basics for Children:

Works with HSHF staff to provide educational workshops to students, parents and school staff.

Asthma Free School Zone:

Provides "No Idling" and "No Smoking" signs to our beneficiary schools and completes environmental assessments of each beneficiary school.

Center for Best Practices in Childhood Obesity Prevention:

Provide a channel for an overarching social marketing campaign targeting the neighborhoods of the beneficiary schools and assist in production and dissemination of a best practices manual for school-based health.

City Harvest:

Provides Fruit Bowl Family Curriculum, a family cooking and nutrition education program, at two beneficiary schools.

Community Healthcare Network (CHN):

Official partner on the \$750,000 (3 year) Health Disparities Grant from the Office of Minority Health which funds the HSHF nutrition and evaluation staffing as well as a portion of the healthy lifestyles budget. CHN with New York Presbyterian Hospital dually-supervises the HSHF nutritionists.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Provides parent cooking classes to our beneficiary schools.

Food Bank for New York City/FoodChange:

Provides CookShop Classroom and CookShop for Adults at multiple HSHF schools. They are also a partner in the SchoolFood Plus initiative, which is in place at three beneficiary schools.

Katchkie Farms/The Sylvia Center:

Supplier of the organic, locally-grown vegetables of our school-based farmer's market and is the site of farm field trips for one beneficiary school.

Nutritious Life:

Provides trained staffing for student nutrition fairs.

Punk Rope:

Donated jump ropes for their jump roping program at two beneficiary schools.

New York Road Runners:

Manages and operates the Mighty Milers/Jeter Meter student running programs at all seven schools in collaboration with HSHF staff.

NYC Department of Education (DOE):

Provides office space for HSHF staff at each beneficiary school. DOE school staff play an active role in all HSHF programming. PS/IS 180 funds 75% of their HSHF Program Coordinator's salary. Official partner on the \$750,000 (3 year) Health Disparities Grant from the Office of Minority Health which funds the HSHF nutrition and evaluation staffing as well as a portion of the healthy lifestyles budget.

NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, East and Central Harlem District Public Health Office:

Assists in communication with DOH and DOE and health promotion at three beneficiary schools. Director of Harlem School Health serves as a Medical Liaison to one of our beneficiary schools.

Turn 2 Foundation:

Provides incentives for the student mileage program and funds the Turn 2 Us program.

Turn 2 Us:

Provides mental health prevention services to two of the seven beneficiary schools. Facilitates Turn 2 Us-HSHF sports leagues.

WIN for Asthma

Provides care coordination to students with high-risk asthma and facilitates communication with our other asthma partners (ABC and Asthma Free School Zone). (This is another New York-Presbyterian Hospital program.)

Contact Information:

For more information about this partnership, please contact the Program Manager, Melissa Pflugh, MS, RD at 212-342-0713 or mep7006@nyp.org.

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

The Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian and Komansky Center for Children's Health understand that the traditional approach of caring for individual children in practice settings does not adequately address today's threats to children's health. Problems such as obesity and asthma are better addressed by a broader approach – making the community as a whole the focus of attention and understanding children's health needs through the interlinking contexts of healthcare, family and community.

The Healthy Schools, Healthy Families (HSHF) Coalition, an elementary school-based health promotion program for medically underserved children in New York City, is comprised of over fifteen community-based, local government, public, and private partners in conjunction with Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital/Columbia and the Komansky Center/Weill Cornell. The program serves five schools (PS 4, 128, 132, 152 180) in Washington Heights and West Harlem, and two (PS 102, 206) in East Harlem.

HSHF promotes healthy lifestyles and mental well-being through community partnerships, identifying and addressing unmet health needs in the school community using a school-based decision making model.

Our goals are to:

- Cultivate a school culture which values physical activity and healthy eating
- Achieve environment and policy change that promotes healthy lifestyles and supports healthful behaviors
- Facilitate access to services for children with health needs, particularly for children with asthma
- Facilitate insurance enrollment for children & families
- Ensure that 100% of children have completed their required immunizations
- Promote mental wellness for students, parents and staff utilizing physical and psycho-educational awareness activities (Currently, this goal is actively pursued at PS 4 and PS 128.)

HSHF is based on the CDC coordinated school health program model, consisting of the components below:

- **Healthy school environment:**
Each school utilizes a social marketing campaign to promote healthy lifestyles using culturally sensitive health messages.
- **Nutrition services:**
All schools have a healthy snack policy.
- **Health services:**
Over 99% of students are up to date with immunizations as a result of HSHF outreach and partnership with DOE.
- **Counseling, psychological & social services:** Optimal academic and social functioning is promoted by mediating the health and mental health stressors in target schools.
- **Physical education:**
We continue to increase the amount of time children are active by promoting in-classroom, recess, and extracurricular activities.
- **Health Education:**
Body Mass Indexes (BMIs) were reported to families via individualized BMI Report Cards to further promote healthy lifestyles and family education.
- **Health promotion for Staff:**
All schools offer staff wellness programs.
- **Family/Community Involvement:**
Each school has an active "Fitness and Nutrition Committee" that meets monthly to set their health and wellness agenda.

Collaborative relationships with community agencies and stakeholders are invaluable for hospitals to fulfill their obligation to address children's health issues in their community. HSHF leaders are members of multiple local, state and national coalitions and task forces to combat childhood obesity and promote school wellness.

We are proud of all we have been able to accomplish and know that there is much work ahead of us. Only by combining the skills and resources of the Medical Center with the energy and immense talents of the community and our multiple community partners can we continue to develop and implement a model program in elementary school health.

Sincerely,
Dodi Meyer, MD
HSHF Co-Director

FAMILY/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Stepping Towards Better Health

One of our most popular parent wellness programs last year was the PS 128 Parent Pedometer Club. Seventeen parents consistently turned in their pedometer logs and were given a weekly newsletter prepared by the HSHF Nutritionist as well as encouragement by the HSHF staff. The newsletters focused on the 8 Healthy Habits and were made available in English and Spanish.

The participants were very diligent about tracking their steps. The participants want to take it a step further this year and make it a group activity. One of them said, “We should meet at least once a week to walk together this year.” The winning parent logged 892,017 steps last year and was awarded a relaxing manicure and pedicure to pamper their hard working feet.




“Having HSHF at our school helps kids build healthy habits and helps the teachers think about lifestyles too.”

– PS 4, 5th Grade Teacher

In conjunction with our community partners, HSHF hosted 89 nutrition events for parents in the 2007-2008 school year, such as CookShop for Adults, City Harvest Fruit Bowl Family Curriculum, Asthma Workshops and a Food Stamp Workshop. Each school also has a viable, self-evaluated Fitness and Nutrition Committee which meets monthly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

HSHF Schools Help Students “Get Fit”



Finding space and time for physical activity can be challenging in NYC schools. This year our schools rose to this challenge with “Get Fit” and Field Day events. “Get Fit” is a program developed by Healthy Schools, Healthy Families to educate students on the importance of exercise as a healthy lifestyle. PS 206 had its second annual “Get Fit” assembly last year where students took part in a variety of fun physical activities. Teachers are encouraged to participate as well. Each year the assembly consists of stations involving exercises that work a variety of muscles and involve challenging movements. Groups are allocated a specific amount of time to complete each station before moving on to the next. These stations include relay racing, tug of war, dance, obstacle courses, jump rope, Transition Exercise, curl up’s and push up’s and running to music. The assembly begins with stretching and ends with a cool down where water and healthy snacks are provided, connecting physical activity with healthy eating habits.

Members of the PS 180 Fitness and Nutrition Committee decided to spice up traditional Field Day by adding new and exciting games to the itinerary.

The students’ favorite event was the sponge game where they had to pass a wet sponge to each other over their heads and under their legs, ensuring a good soaking! Organization by the Fitness and Nutrition Committee allowed for a fabulous day of safe, active play.

The PS 132 field day featured a lot of relay-style events and awards were presented to the top three teams. A plethora of physical activity equipment was incorporated into this fun filled day including balls, jump ropes, and potato sacks. Field day focuses on team work and leadership skills and also provides participants with extreme exercises that emphasize the role of physical activity in a healthy lifestyle.

Other student physical activity programs include Tai Chi, Transition Exercise, Jeter Meter/Mighty Milers running programs, Turn 2 Us dance and sports teams, Capoeira, and Punk Rope. 2007-2008 was another successful year for HSHF in the Mighty Milers/Jeter Meter program; four of our schools placed in the top 15 for total miles ran citywide.

Learning to Eat Smart: “Sometimes” vs. “Everyday” foods

Every year students are provided with dynamic nutrition information at school Healthy Schools Healthy Families Nutrition Fairs. These hands-on fairs cover a number of topics including fast food, healthy snacking, fruits and vegetables, hydration, healthy beverages, and low-fat dairy. Topics are tied to HSHF’s social marketing campaign by focusing on the “Healthy Habit of the Month”. Students are taught skills in choosing healthy foods “everyday,” and how to limit “sometimes” foods with added fats and sugar to one to two times a week. The Nutrition Fairs also link the Healthy Habit of the Month with the prevention of medical conditions such as heart disease, dental decay, obesity, and diabetes.

During a Nutrition Fair, classes travel between three different stations, each featuring a hands-on nutrition lesson taught by the HSHF Nutritionists. Last February, over 700 PS 152 students attended a Nutrition Fair and learned about the February Healthy Habit of the Month, “Snack on healthy foods instead of junk foods and sweets.” The students were shocked to see how much sugar and fat were in popular snack foods. Next, students learned which foods make delicious snacks and contain essential

nutrients by “grocery shopping” for snacks during the Body Building Snacks lesson. Finally, students showed disgust at the displays of how sugary snacks contribute to tooth decay. After the Nutrition Fair, students recognized that foods and beverages that were part of the Healthy Snack Policy were “everyday foods,” and necessary for optimal academic and physical performance. Teachers continue to report that this nutrition fair made a lasting impression on the students; one fourth grade teacher reported that her students no longer brought Tropical Fantasy and other high sugar beverages on class field trips. HSHF will host two nutrition fairs at each school during the 2008-2009 school year.

With three registered dietitians on staff, nutrition continues to be an integral part of HSHF. With our community partners, HSHF hosted 205 nutrition events for students in the 2007-2008 school year, such as Nutrition Fairs, CookShop Classroom, Nutrition Clubs, Breakfast Clubs and breakfast attendance competitions. All nutrition programming underscores the healthy snack policy and is planned according to the Healthy Habit of the Month.



“My son does like the program. He is more selective about what he eats before he eats it. Sometimes he even stops me before I eat unhealthy foods.”

– PS206, Parent

HEALTH PROMOTION FOR STAFF

Staff Wellness... in Bathrooms?

HSHF is so committed to Staff Wellness that it has even turned each staff bathroom in their seven schools into health education hotspots. *Dear John* is a monthly publication in *Dear Abby* format that is posted in the staff bathroom stalls. *Dear John* is written by the HSHF nutritionists and is used to promote the Healthy Habit of the Month. *Dear John* is routinely listed as one of the school staff's favorite HSHF initiatives and is so popular that some staff members at PS 132 have it emailed to them every month. These well crafted messages and the repetition

of staffers reading and re-reading the letters all month long prove that any space, even public school bathrooms, can be effectively used for health education!

Buy-in of the school staff is essential to making real change in the schools, as well as a key component of program sustainability. In addition to the 48 nutrition events held for staff, HSHF also provided staff Pilates, belly dancing and salsa specifically for staff during the 2007-2008 school year.

"The asthma program really made a difference with the No Idling and No Smoking signs."

*– PS132,
Cluster Teacher*

HEALTH SERVICES & HEALTH EDUCATION

WIN for Asthma

In May 2006, Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital initiated the Washington-Heights Inwood Network (WIN) for Asthma – a hospital-community partnership designed to improve outcomes for children with poorly controlled asthma. WIN for Asthma offers culturally-appropriate care coordination services, provider outreach and quality improvement, and community-wide screening and education.

To date, Community Health Workers have enrolled more than 200 families, of which 17% were referred

by HSHF schools. At follow-up, 83% of families reduced the frequency of visits to the emergency department, 74% reduced the frequency of hospitalizations, 63% reduced the frequency of symptom-days, and 83% reduced the frequency of asthma-related missed school days.

Through our partnership with Asthma Basics for Children, HSHF was able to host Asthma Workshops for students and parents. For the fourth consecutive year, all HSHF schools are within 99% immunization compliance, exceeding the DOE requirements.

COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGICAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

Turn 2 Us

The Turn 2 Us sports and dance teams are an innovative way to address the need for physical activity and the prevention and promotion of mental health. In the 2007-2008 school year, Turn 2 Us facilitated and led a boys and girls basketball league and a co-ed softball league, which involved five neighboring elementary schools. It also facilitated a co-ed dance team in two schools. The teams were developed to provide extra support to students 'at-risk' for developing a school-aged disorder such as depression, anxiety or attention deficit with hyperactivity. However, it also served students with a diagnosed school-aged disorder, particularly those whose parents opted out of treatment.

One of the criteria of the Turn 2 Us program is that students complete a self-esteem and coping inventory

questionnaire so that their mentoring can be tailored to the teams' needs. The mentorship component is led by trained staff. A second criteria is that their academic and social performance be monitored on a routine basis. Therefore, classroom teachers are asked to complete student assessments and parents are informed of the results. In addition, teachers receive classroom consultation as needed and crisis screening and referrals are conducted school-wide.

Our mental health prevention services are based on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model, with Turn 2 Us targeting the at-risk students, school-based mental health clinics targeting high risk students and HSHF targeting the entire school population.