

# Success Stories

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

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*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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## IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 **Teachers Take Advantage of Local Treasure**  
AT TREASURE ISLAND ELEMENTARY
- 2 **Small Change Makes Big Impact**  
AT NORTH CANAAN ELEMENTARY
- 3 **A Healthy Lunch with the Principal**  
AT ALMA SCHRADER ELEMENTARY
- 3 **Walking the Green**  
AT FLAGAMI ELEMENTARY
- 4 **School Nurses Stay After School to Get Kids Moving!**  
AT ORCHARD FARM ELEMENTARY
- 4 **Cherry Tree Puts the "Fun" in Fundraiser**  
AT CHERRY TREE ELEMENTARY

### Success Story No. 1

## Brooklyn Students Walk Across America After School

P.S. 503  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

**P.S. 503's Walk Across America Club integrates physical activity and learning across curricular areas as part of a creative afterschool program. Students walk with pedometers and have the opportunity to study geography, math, history, practice their writing, create charts and graphs, and learn healthy habits. P.S. 503 serves 747 students in pre-K through 5th grade in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Sunset Park.**

With a new principal and a new strategy for success, the faculty and staff have been working towards improving the health of their school across the board. The Walk Across America program is the creation of PE Teacher Maureen Biesty, who proposed that the program be included in the school activities budget. Students meet with Ms. Biesty after school and walk around the school wearing pedometers. Students take the sum of all steps and plot their progress on a large map displayed on the wall in the classroom.

At the first milestone city, Philadelphia, the students sent postcards to the principal or their teacher telling them what they learned about the city they were "visiting." When they reached the Heartland, the students set their goal for the year- reaching Hollywood! The students convinced Ms. Biesty



to let them wear the pedometers home so they could log more miles and reach their goal faster. When they arrived in Hollywood at the end of the year, the school's art teacher created a special replica of Grauman's Chinese Theater and the students walked the red carpet at their very own movie premiere event.

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### BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE:



This year the students are walking their way back east. When visiting Washington State, Ms. Biesty purchased a variety of apples and held a taste test combining the different apples with peanut butter to introduce the students to healthier snack options. Now in its second year, Walk Across America is one of the most popular afterschool activities at P.S. 503. Ms. Biesty is proud of the students and notes that “they are learning all kind of skills- math, geography, and lifelong fitness as well. This year students began asking me if they could join Walk Across America on the first day of school.”

### Success Story No. 2

## Teachers Take Advantage of Local Treasure

TREASURE ISLAND ELEMENTARY  
NORTH BAY VILLAGE, FLORIDA

**Teachers at Treasure Island Elementary are taking advantage of their beautiful, natural surroundings and heading to the beach to improve their health! As part of the Healthy Schools action plan at this South Florida school, teachers have started a walking club called the Pirettes (sounds like pirates). Every Saturday morning they meet at 7:30 am and walk along the boardwalk to South Beach and back. The entire trip is four miles long. In addition to getting exercise, teachers get a chance to enjoy the sand and water, and each other’s company. Led by Jill Blanco, the PE Coach at Treasure Island, the group’s goal is to work their way up from walking to jogging the entire distance.**

These wonderful walkers are also encouraging the parents and other members of the community to join them on their weekly pilgrimage. “Waking up in the morning and walking along the boardwalk before the sun gets too hot and the breeze is coming in from the ocean is very therapeutic and refreshing,” Blanco said. “You almost forget you’re exercising! It’s the perfect way to relax your mind before your busy day begins...as well as get in shape.”

### Success Story No. 3

## Small Change Makes Big Impact at North Canaan Elementary School

NORTH CANAAN ELEMENTARY  
NORTH CANAAN, CONNECTICUT

**In an effort to increase school lunch participation, the North Canaan Elementary School Wellness Council initiated a change last year to move recess, often an after-lunch tradition, to before lunch. While this change did not cost the school any money or additional resources, it has shown great rewards in the school environment such as improved attentiveness in the classroom.**

Recognizing the importance of both healthy eating and physical activity, the School Wellness Council took a page from conventional wisdom—that it is not a good idea to be physically active immediately after eating—and decided to try having recess before lunch. This no-cost proposal was met with some skepticism at first but the results quickly spoke for themselves. Lunch participation has increased and students are more attentive when they return to class. The experiment was so successful that the school has permanently changed the schedule.

North Canaan is a small, rural community in northwestern Connecticut. When North Canaan Elementary School joined the Healthy Schools Program as a pilot school in 2006, they were already committed to improving the health and wellness of their students. The School Wellness Council meets regularly and is comprised of teachers, staff, parents and community members. North Canaan Elementary has instituted a number of creative changes, such as the “85210” campaign to promote healthy habits. The “85210” campaign encourages students to get eight hours of sleep per night, five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, no more than two hours of television, at least one hour of active play, and zero alcohol and drugs.

## Success Story No. 4

# A Healthy Lunch with the Principal

ALMA SCHRADER ELEMENTARY  
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI

At Alma Schrader Elementary School in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, a trip to see the principal now has a whole new meaning. As part of a new program at the school, children who show good behavior can earn the chance to eat a healthy school lunch with the principal. The children are taught the nationwide program 'Character Counts,' which encourages them to use the six pillars of character: respect, honesty, courage, responsibility, caring and trustworthiness. When children are observed showing good behavior they are given a slip and pencil which places them in a monthly drawing. Four children from each grade are selected by the principal to have a semi-formal luncheon with her. That day's healthy school lunch is served to those children on formal dinnerware by the principal, in the lunchroom with all other children observing.

Alma Schrader students also participated in International Walk to School Day on October 3, 2007. International Walk to School Day and Week are promoted through efforts by the International Walk to School Steering Group ([www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)). These school-based initiatives advocate that walking is a valuable physical activity that can replace sedentary time spent as a passenger being driven to school. Walk to School also advocates for built environments that encourage walking to school. Walk participants were able to use new sidewalks placed around the perimeter of the school grounds recently by local city government.

## Success Story No. 5

# Walking the Green

FLAGAMI ELEMENTARY  
MIAMI, FLORIDA

Every Friday at Flagami Elementary, students, staff, and even some neighbors, don green t-shirts and incorporate more physical activity into their daily routine by "Walking the Green." This event began as a one-time activity where the school community walked around their large field showing solidarity for eating healthy and participating in physical exercise but it was so popular they decided to continue it. Students report that they enjoy the walk because it gives them more energy and makes them feel healthy. Teachers say they wish they could walk even more. They also comment on how the walk invigorates the students and prepares them for learning in school.

In addition to the weekly walk, every day after the school's morning announcements, students and staff stretch together with an exercise video produced by the School Wellness Council, with help from the school media specialist.

The principal from Flagami Elementary attended the Healthy Schools Forum in 2006 and came back enthusiastic about making big changes in the school environment. Her excitement has spread to students, the PTA, and the surrounding community. Flagami Elementary plans to keep working on making changes to improve the health of their school.



## Success Story No. 6

# School Nurses Stay After School to Get Kids Moving!

ORCHARD FARM ELEMENTARY  
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

The Orchard Farm Nurses Office has started an afterschool program called "Healthy Choices." The group meets once per week after school to discuss nutrition and learn about making healthy choices. They experiment with healthy recipes, try new foods, and talk about decreasing "screen time" and increasing activity. They also allow time to "rap" about problems kids are facing. Then they start moving! They play kickball, wiffle ball, or go for a walk around the track. They dance, sing, and just enjoy each others company. The 30 or so children who are participating are enthusiastic about the class and are eager to share what they have learned with their classmates.

## Success Story No. 7

# Cherry Tree Puts the "Fun" in Fundraiser

CHERRY TREE ELEMENTARY  
CARMEL, INDIANA

Cherry Tree Elementary School hosted a healthy fundraiser event to raise money for the American Heart Association. The event was spearheaded by Teggie Rogers, the school nurse, Gail Hill, a school counselor, and Debbie Diersing, who is in charge of wellness initiatives for staff and students. Students were given healthy snacks including frozen yogurt, and water. The school invited a jump rope team from another school whose talented students performed for the school. The event also featured a showing of "Jump In," a Disney movie about a young boxer who discovers a passion for the active sport of jump roping. According to Teggie, "we weren't sure how well the healthy snacks would go over with the kids, but they loved them! They really liked the frozen yogurt because it tasted just like ice cream."



# Featured Resource

## JAM School Program

The JAM School Program is a free program for schools (K-12) which brings health education and daily activity into the classroom. Every week of the school year the program delivers a one-minute exercise routine called the JAMmin' Minute which helps to get both students and staff up and moving. The JAMmin' Minute includes five very simple exercises that kids can do while either standing or sitting in a chair. The program also includes a weekly health tip that helps kids learn a healthier habit. Every month schools will receive the Health-E-tips Newsletter which is designed for school-age kids and their parents and packed full of nutrition, fitness and health tips. The newsletter can be used as a handout for the kids, for placement in the school newspaper, and for posting around the schools and on the internet.



How the JAMmin' Minutes are being used in schools across the country:

- Teachers are making JAMmin' Minutes a part of the classroom curriculum and using them throughout the school day.
- PE teachers are using JAMmin' Minutes as a supplement, or as a warm up to their regular programs. They may combine several weeks of the 60-second workout to create a whole new fitness routine.
- Principals are integrating fitness minutes in their morning announcement and as a kick-off to school assemblies.
- School class presidents are using them for a mini-fitness break or re-energizer during school events.
- Nurses are using them to provide health education to their schools.
- Schools are using them for staff wellness.
- Students are leading their classmates as "drill sergeants" of the week.

For more information, or to sign up your school visit [www.jamschoolprogram.com](http://www.jamschoolprogram.com)