Project Healthy Schools Goals

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Choose less sugary food and beverages
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Be active every day
- Spend less time in front of a screen

Did you know?

- PHS was one of six beneficiaries of the Big House 5K: Trail to the Victors run held on April 12, 2015 at the U-M Stadium.
- Father Marquette Middle School, a Building Healthy Communities partnership school, was featured on Channel 6 news in Marquette in February. Watch the story at: http://www.uppermichigansource.com/news/story.aspx?id=1163927#.VOIEWebF-E4
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and Detroit Medical Center Foundation are joining forces to support PHS programming in several Detroit schools in the 2015-2016 school year.

Five schools pilot PHS long-distance model

Until this year, all PHS schools were located within an easy drive, less than 100 miles, from Ann Arbor. PHS staff typically visit the schools frequently in the first year to deliver supplies, assist with school-wide wellness events, train wellness champions and help facilitate wellness team meetings. To expand the program across Michigan, PHS needed to find a less hands-on approach to implementing the program. This year, PHS is piloting a long distance implementation model in five schools that are located over two hours away from Ann Arbor, including: Allendale Middle School, Delton-Kellogg Middle School and Vista Charter Academy on the west side of the state; and Father Marquette Middle School and Manistique Middle School in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The distance model

Compared to PHS’ traditional hands-on approach, the distance model assumes that PHS staff may only travel to the school a few times during the school year. It requires planning, creativity and greater use of technology to ensure successful program delivery. While email and phone calls continue to be the primary modes of communication, Skype and Google Hangout are also used to attend meetings remotely from Ann Arbor.

Kelly Merrill, the wellness champion at Allendale Middle School in Allendale, Michigan said, “Being a part of the PHS program this year from one of the farthest distances has been challenging at times, but the benefits and impact to our students and school community have far outweighed any challenges we have faced. Communication with my PHS representative over the distance has been exceptional and we have utilized Google docs, e-mail and different online surveys to help us administer the program effectively.”

Choosing the right Schools

Distance schools are also asked to take on more responsibility for delivery of the program components and more ownership of the program earlier in the implementation process. Therefore, it is important to find schools that are committed to the goals of the PHS program and have an infrastructure to support program implementation. Key factors considered in selecting schools for long-distance program implementation include:

- a supportive administration, including both the superintendent and principal;
- a wellness champion in the building;
- a supportive staff who serve as positive healthy role models;
- a food service staff or vendor interested in collaboration and partnership; and
- involved parents and community members.

(See Long-distance model on back page)
Meet healthy food dynamo, Doreen Simonds

Doreen Simonds is a dynamo when it comes to helping kids make healthy food choices. Simonds is the nutrition and purchasing director for Waterford School District (WSD) in Oakland County, Michigan. She has held this position for the past three years, after rising through the ranks during 29 years with the Waterford Nutrition Services. She is a member of several nutrition associations and has implemented many innovative programs at WSD.

Also a mother and grandmother, Simonds said, “Although it was always important to me to feed my children a balanced meal, I think my real awareness on good nutrition came about eight years ago when we got a Michigan Team Nutrition Wellness grant. We were required to apply for the Healthier US School Challenge. It fired me up to want to see wellness changes in our food services.”

It’s no wonder Simonds was fired up. “We received awards for 13 of our schools and were honored to be invited to a Healthier US School Challenge reception at the White House in 2011,” said Simonds who counts this as one of her team’s greatest accomplishments to date.

Simonds has applied for nearly forty grants aimed at making the schools in the Waterford District healthier. “One of our first grants was a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Building Healthy Communities grant and we started a “Fruity Friday” program which was a huge hit,” said Simonds. “Then we received two Hidden Valley Ranch Love Your Veggies grants and a MI Team Nutrition Garden grant and started implementing school gardens and introducing more fresh veggies into our meal programs. We got very involved with Fuel up to Play 60 and have had 14 grants which have made changes in everything from express breakfast lines at our high schools to creating a Waterford School District Nutrition & Fitness team,” continues Simonds. These are just a few of the grants and innovative programs spearheaded by Simonds.

Simonds is an enthusiastic supporter of the Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools program at Pierce and Mason Middle Schools. She said, “The partnership has created more nutrition and health awareness with families, students and staff. It has brought staff together in a variety of ways to work towards a healthier atmosphere in the buildings. PHS provides great resources to further our wellness efforts. The PHS coordinators are very informed on school food regulations such as Smart Snacks and have been a great help in keeping the staff up-to-date on the dynamics of nutrition changes, not only on a personal level but also in the school meal programs.

“It is great to see the staff and students working together towards a healthier school environment and observing students being more conscious about their choices in the meal lines,” added Simonds.

PHS and Simonds have worked together to encourage healthier choices in the lunch room. Thanks to the partnership, Simonds said, “We now place fruit baskets by the registers to encourage more fresh fruit choices and have made some other Smarter Lunchroom changes, such as having white milk at the start of the milk choices and more good nutrition promotion signage in the lunchrooms. We made the healthier choices look more appealing by putting the fruits and veggies in black containers (which were less expensive than the clear!) and put them on red trays. Very appealing and more kids take fruits and veggies now! Serving farm fresh fruits and veggies, which taste better encourages students to make those choices. Adding signage to let students know which farm the produce came from and its health benefits further promotes these good choices.”

As for evidence of the impact that PHS is having, Simonds said, “Our teachers at Pierce have commented that it is such a refreshing change to see kids walking the halls munching on apples and pears instead of chips and candy bars.”
Mobile devices associated with less exercise and more screen time
by Rachel Sylvester, research coordinator.

Cellphones and tablets have become increasingly popular among children and adolescents in recent years. While television, computers and video games used to be the sole contributors to screen time, these new mobile technologies have increased the pervasiveness of the media in the lives of our nation’s children. It is reported that children are averaging seven hours of daily screen time; this is in stark contrast to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendation of two hours or less per day.

A recent Project Healthy Schools study on 2,566 sixth graders found that over 20% of students report spending more than two hours on a mobile device. As this percentage is not accounting for other screen times (TV, computer, and video game time), it is likely that a much higher percentage of middle school students are not adhering to the AAP guidelines. A majority of high mobile device users (students who reported greater than two hours of mobile device time per day) were female (60.5%). High mobile device users also reported higher rates of other sedentary activities (TV, computer, and video game time) and lower rates of physical activity and participation in sports teams.

This study illustrates the need to treat mobile devices as additional screen time conduits and recognize the potentially detrimental effects they have on adolescent health.

13 schools hold Michigan apple tasting events

Students at thirteen schools participated in Michigan apple tasting events sponsored by the Michigan Apple Committee. At each school, three varieties of Michigan apples were featured: Gala, Jonagold and Braeburn. Students tasted each of the three varieties and then selected their favorite apple variety. Additional educational materials were provided to students including healthy tip cards.

The Michigan Apple Committee provided promotional materials, tasting forms, apple corers for the events and enough apples for about half of the schools. Funds to buy additional apples for the rest of the schools came from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and from a General Mills Foundation Champions for Healthy Kids grant.

The events were held at lunch time in the school cafeterias. Many school food service directors assisted with the cutting and serving of the apples. PHS assisted in facilitating the delivery of the apples to the schools, distributing materials provided by Michigan Apple Committee, and providing hands on support to help to cut and serve the apples and collect feedback from students on the tasting experience.
Long-distance model  Continued from page 1

Father Marquette Middle School in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula is just such a school. Schools in the Upper Peninsula often don’t have access to the resources available to schools in the Lower Peninsula, so when Abby Shunk, a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Father Marquette, heard about Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools she quickly got her administrators on board and completed the application. Shunk said, “The Project Healthy Schools program is a valuable component in our middle school curriculum. It has empowered students, through both education and activity, to embrace healthy habits. Watching them take their personal health into their own hands has been powerful.”

Looking to the future

PHS is seeking grant funding and private philanthropy to adapt technology-based educational methods to assist with growth and advancement of the program. Integrating new platforms into existing evidence-based curriculum and programming will expand the ability of the PHS program to reach further distances at a reduced cost of both resources and time. It will also expand programming to new audiences.

Board member Galardi’s passion is for kids and schools

On the PHS Advisory Board since March 2011, Bob Galardi plays a crucial role in advising and guiding PHS. He is a retired teacher and administrator who spent 32 years in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. He now runs a business called Educators Resource Group. Galardi is currently working with several Detroit Public Schools to help them reinvent themselves and achieve their visions. It is clear that he has a passion for his work.

Asked how he came to serve on the PHS Advisory Board, Galardi said, “I knew about Project Healthy Schools from my time in the Ann Arbor Public Schools and I thought [PHS] did good work. When one of my former students, who now works for U-M’s Development Office, called me and said, ‘Will you serve on the board?’ I was so impressed and so happy to see one of my former students out there in the world doing good things, I just couldn’t say no! Then I found out what the board was doing and I started meeting the members of the board and learned about the work that PHS was doing in Detroit. From that point on, it completely connected to my belief about education and the importance of healthy eating to students’ ability to learn and live long healthy lives.”

Galardi didn’t start out wanting to be an educator. He says he originally wanted an acting career. He went into teaching as a backup, but it soon became his passion.

“The thing that got me into schools was the students, the children, and that’s what really kept me there. I have a passion for seeing them develop and learn. I want schools to be places where students want to be, because their schools are places of excitement, growth, safety and health. I have a passion for doing it in a way that the students have a voice, because I believe that students have a lot of rights that are sometimes left at the schoolhouse door,” explains Galardi.

Galardi was instrumental in helping PHS pilot the Science of Wellness program at Cody High School in Detroit made possible by funding from the Wetsman Foundation. He says, “The expansion into high schools that we’re making with the class obviously is something that is near and dear to my heart. And the kind of staff that [PHS] brought on board is phenomenal. Something that sticks out to me is the generosity of the people who work at PHS. They are so committed to helping kids.

“Sometimes people say, ‘Why would we care about the health of the kids in Detroit when they have so many other problems?’ I believe all children deserve healthy food, as well as encouragement, support and guidance when it comes to their health. There is a certain equity to the PHS program that I think is really great. We’re in Detroit because there’s a need there, but we’re in Ann Arbor because there’s a need there too.”

PHS is so fortunate to have Galardi on its board, with his vast experience and passion for public education. As for his career in acting, watch for him in a starring role in annual Ann Arbor Burns Park Area Players productions.

Thank You PHS Supporters!

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
Champions for Healthy Kids (General Mills Foundation)
Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
D. Dan and Betty Kahn Foundation
DeRoy Testamentary Foundation
Detroit Medical Center Foundation
Marvin and Betty Danto Family Foundation
Memorial Healthcare Foundation
Michigan Department of Community Health
Speckhard-Knight Charitable Foundation
University of Michigan Health System
Wetsman Foundation

We are also grateful to the many other corporations, foundations and individual donors who have supported PHS over the years.

Information on how to donate is available at www.projecthealthyschools.org

Project Healthy Schools: 734-764-0246, www.projecthealthyschools.org