

YOUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH

IN HARRISBURG

Highmark Healthy High 5:

HELPING KIDS ACHIEVE LIFELONG GOOD HEALTH – IN FIVE KEY AREAS

Highmark Healthy High 5 helps kids, ages 6–18, to develop lifelong healthy behaviors in five key areas: nutrition, physical activity, grieving support, self-esteem and bullying prevention. The initiative aims to create a culture of good health through what academics call children's health promotion.

"We've long known – and research supports – that the healthy habits that children develop when young will con-

tinue with them into adulthood," explains Yvonne Cook, president of the Highmark Foundation.

That's why, in 2006, the Highmark Foundation created Highmark Healthy High 5 through a \$100 million donation from Highmark Inc. Key health indicators showed that children in Pennsylvania were struggling with understanding good nutrition, finding the opportunity for physical exercise and coping with complex emotions. Today, the healthy impact of the initiative is resonating throughout the Commonwealth, in our own backyards.

"More than 1 million kids across Pennsylvania have benefited from Highmark Healthy High 5 since its introduction," says Cook. "The initiative is provid-

Highmark Healthy High 5 emphasizes good health for kids through:

- NUTRITION
- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- GRIEVING SUPPORT
- SELF-ESTEEM
- BULLYING PREVENTION

ing our children with tools, knowledge and skills to enhance their physical and emotional well-being. We're reaching kids in the classroom, on the playground, in the gym, through Web-based activities and in after-school programs."

Highmark Healthy High 5 relies on proven, evidence-based partnership programs – for example, with the SPARK Active Recreation program

and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Partners are chosen specifically for their demonstrated outcomes for engaging children, parents, school personnel and the community in the pursuit of healthier behaviors – and healthier environments.

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At Hanover's YWCA, SPARK Is a Hit

In the end, it was Billy who made the program work for the other three dozen kids.

At the Hanover YWCA, adult leader Robbie Williams helps to run a day-care program for kids 10 and under – before and after school and camp in the summer. Most of the kids are fine. Then, there was Billy, for whom sports didn't come easy. But this was different – this was SPARK.

The Highmark Healthy High 5 SPARK Active Recreation program helps kids of all skill levels discover what's inherent in all of them – their built-in energy,

their innate enjoyment of fun and fitness. A nationally recognized physical activity program, SPARK is designed for children ages 5–14, promoting moderate to vigorous activities for up to one hour daily and establishing lifelong healthy behaviors.

For Billy, the turning point came during Houdini Hoops, a game where the kids link arms and try to get a hula hoop around the circle without letting go of each other. At first, Billy had a hard time. And the other kids were impatient. Then Williams said, "If you guys help him, he can get it done faster." So the other kids helped Billy and he got it – and became excited about playing it.

"With SPARK," Williams says, "there's a lot of support. With other games, it's all win-lose. But with SPARK, it's win-win. It's about getting things accomplished. If the kids see others struggling, they help. They take other children under their wing."

Using SPARK two afternoons a week for half an hour, "the most common thing," Williams adds, "are team success stories. In the Clothing Race, for example, they have to cheer for the other team. It really brings everybody together. Everybody works together to get the job done. At the YWCA, they're always wondering if it's a SPARK day. It's really a wonderful thing for the children." ■



At the Hanover YWCA, everyone succeeds in the SPARK after-school recreation program. SPARK is being utilized at more than 140 sites across Pennsylvania.

COMBATING CHILDHOOD OBESITY with eTools Technology

Beginning in 2002, Highmark's health records indicated a distinct jump in the incidence of type 2 diabetes among its insured children. Prior to that, type 2 diabetes was practically unheard of among children. The culprit: obesity.

Then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported the same trend nationally. CDC data showed that since the mid-1970s, kids and adults have had a sharply higher incidence of being overweight or obese, leading to higher rates of hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.

Finally came state and federal mandates requiring schools to capture student Body Mass Index (BMI) and create wellness policies to address physical activity and nutrition in schools. But how, without resources?

Highmark Healthy High 5 responded by arming educators, school nurses, administrators and food service professionals with a sophisticated tool that facilitates policy, practice and curriculum changes to address nutritional and physical fitness deficiencies in their own school environments. The tool: Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools, offered free to schools in the Highmark Foundation's service area through 2013.

"It's a secure, Web-based portal that enables schools to both comply with federal and state mandates for improving student wellness and develop a proactive, coordinated approach to

obesity reduction, based on best practices," explains Martha L. Harris, co-founder of InnerLink, with whom the Highmark Foundation has contracted to develop the program.

Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools can have a positive impact on the menus in the cafeteria, the fitness activities in gym class, nutrition lessons in health class and more.

"It encompasses better health data collection, including BMI screenings, better health record keeping and more strategic use of aggregated student health data to formulate strategies for particular school populations," says Harris.

As a high-tech tool, Health eTools allows health data to be recorded and reported to the state and to parents more efficiently, allowing school health professionals much more time to spend with students. As a way of aggregating data as a catalyst for change, it has the capability to support changes in the menus in the cafeteria, the fitness activities in gym class, the way nutrition is taught in health class, acquisition of new equipment and programs, and a whole range of other potential ways for reducing obesity.

Thus far, some 400,000 students in more than 800 Pennsylvania school buildings have benefitted from the program. And 44 percent of the schools are using Health eTools to measure BMI.

"Ultimately, the goal is to create healthier students, who, research shows, make better learners," summarizes Harris. ■

To see if Health eTools is in your schools, visit www.healthtoolsforschools.org.

At Palmyra High, Nurses Can Do More to Help Students

One high school student came to see nurse Marge Ober a few days in a row complaining of feeling sick, but nothing was wrong. Able to track days, times and visits, nurse Ober called the student's mother. The student was having panic attacks – and the parents had no idea. A physician gave the student counseling and medication. The child is now doing fine.

Nurse Ober spotted this student's problems using Highmark Healthy High 5's Health eTools for Schools – a secure, Web-based portal for improving student wellness that documents health data and generates the yearly reports on Body Mass Index (BMI) and all other reports and screenings mandated by the Commonwealth.

With approximately 1,000 students in Palmyra Area High School, it is very cumbersome to track everything using traditional paperwork. Now, nurse Ober says, "Health eTools tracks everything. The program logs when the students come in and when they leave, whether they're here for an injury or illness or medication. With more than 5,000 student visits a year, I use it all day long. At the end of the year, I can generate the required reports with the click of a button."

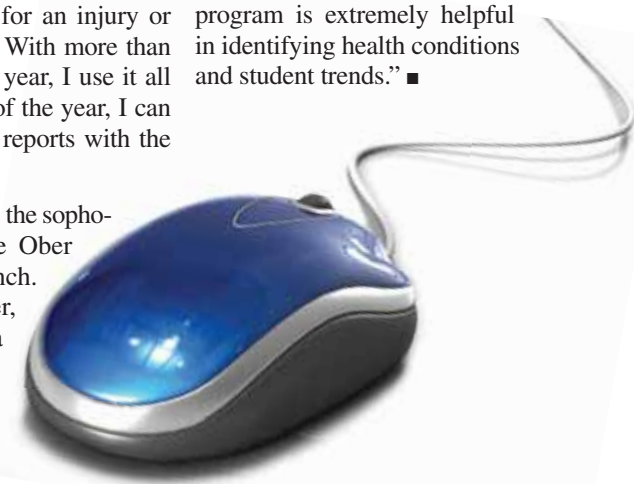
Consider, for example, the sophomore who saw nurse Ober every day after lunch. Calling the mother, Ober alerted her to a possible eating disorder. This year, the student is in counseling – and is eating well.



In the Harrisburg area, nurses at 199 schools are using Health eTools to record student health data more efficiently, freeing up time to address student health concerns.

Then there was the young man who kept falling asleep in first period. Nurse Ober and eTools spotted the trend. Now the boy takes his medication every morning.

"This program keeps a history of each student's visit," nurse Ober says. "The goal is to promote a healthy environment for students to learn. The eTools program is extremely helpful in identifying health conditions and student trends." ■



Through Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools, children's collective health data, including Body Mass Index (BMI), is a catalyst for health-related changes at school.

Taking the Fear Out of Growing Up

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a schoolchild is bullied every seven minutes. And every day, more than 160,000 students miss school because of the fear of being bullied. Bullying comes in many forms: exclusion

and more incidence of suicidal thinking. Furthermore, bullying impacts school performance and attendance. It leads to physical health problems. And it's been clearly tied to episodes of school violence.

“Safe school environments are critical to the academic success of students.”

*Matthew Masiello, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Windber Research Institute
Architect of Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!
A Bullying Prevention Program*

from groups, threatening messages, repeated teasing and taunting and physical violence.

Children who are bullied have lower self-esteem, higher rates of depression

For that reason, Highmark Healthy High 5 is supporting the very best bullying prevention programs developed in the world.

Through both Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!® and PA CARES, the Highmark Foundation has awarded more than \$5.1 million to fund programs through 2010 in 400 schools across Pennsylvania. Both programs help schools to implement the internationally renowned, evidence-based Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. For more than 25 years, the Olweus program has produced excellent results, decreasing bullying behaviors among children in grades K–10 between 20 and 70 percent. It includes interventions at the

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Wheatland Standing Up Against Bullying

At the Wheatland Middle School in the Lancaster School District, guidance counselor Jen Jesberger summarizes how important she feels their bullying prevention program is to school success and self-esteem. “When students feel safe, they can concentrate much better on their academics,” explains Jesberger. “And the bullying prevention program also lets students know that ‘it’s not them, they’re doing nothing wrong,’ if they’re being bullied, but it’s the other way around.”

Your Child May Be Bullied If He/She:

- Comes home with torn or damaged clothing
- Has unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- Is afraid of going to school
- Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed
- Has low self-esteem

In 2007, the Lancaster School District brought the internationally renowned Olweus Bullying Prevention Program into their schools through Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT! – a Bullying Prevention Program. By February 2008, the faculty at Wheatland was trained and working intensely with the students there, while the district was expanding the program to additional elementary and middle schools. “At Wheatland, we began with a large bullying prevention kickoff event, an assembly,” explains Jesberger. “Then, we proceeded to classroom lessons on bullying about how to identify it, what our expectations are about



According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a school child is bullied every seven minutes.

preventing it and how to report it. On-going, we have weekly class meetings where students can share concerns and brainstorm solutions.

“The most important change is in awareness,” says Jesberger. “We’re making a big deal about preventing bullying.

Everyone from the administrators to the teachers to the students now knows that bullying is wrong and that we won’t tolerate it. And research tells us that students must feel safe – it’s a strong need, in order for them to perform well in school.” ■

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Never tell your child to “ignore” bullying.
- Don’t blame your child or assume your child provoked the bullying.
- Encourage your child to talk about the bullying with you.
- Tell your child that bullying is wrong and that you’re glad he or she had the courage to discuss it.
- Don’t encourage physical retaliation against the bully such as “hit him back.”
- Take quick action. Contact a teacher, school counselor or principal immediately about the bullying.
- Work closely with school personnel to resolve the problem. Describe how and where your child is being bullied so that a school principal or teacher can witness the bullying.
- Remember that all children have the right to feel safe.
- Help your children to develop healthy friendships with students at school. A child who has friends is less likely to be bullied.
- Ensure that your child feels safe and well-loved at home.



In middle and high schools, students learn about bullying behaviors and preventions through teacher-led role-playing sessions that result in healthier school environments.

Funding Schools' Wish Lists

"Thank you for such a positive addition to our school."

"With your help, I truly believe that we have inspired our students and their families to make healthy living a habit."

These are the kinds of responses that the Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program inspires.



The School Challenge grant program provides funding that enables schools and physical education teachers to change the face of physical education in their schools by developing innovative programs that teach lifelong wellness. Most of the grants are written by teachers with a vision and passion for what would make a difference in their school.

Schools are invited ("challenged") to submit proposals for programs that will measurably improve the overall health status of students. All schools within the Highmark Foundation's 49-county Pennsylvania service area are eligible to apply for grants up to \$10,000 per building each year.

Since 2007, Highmark Healthy High 5 has awarded \$3.5 million in school challenge grants to 496 schools in 47 Pennsylvania counties.

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\$3.5 MILLION FOR 496 P

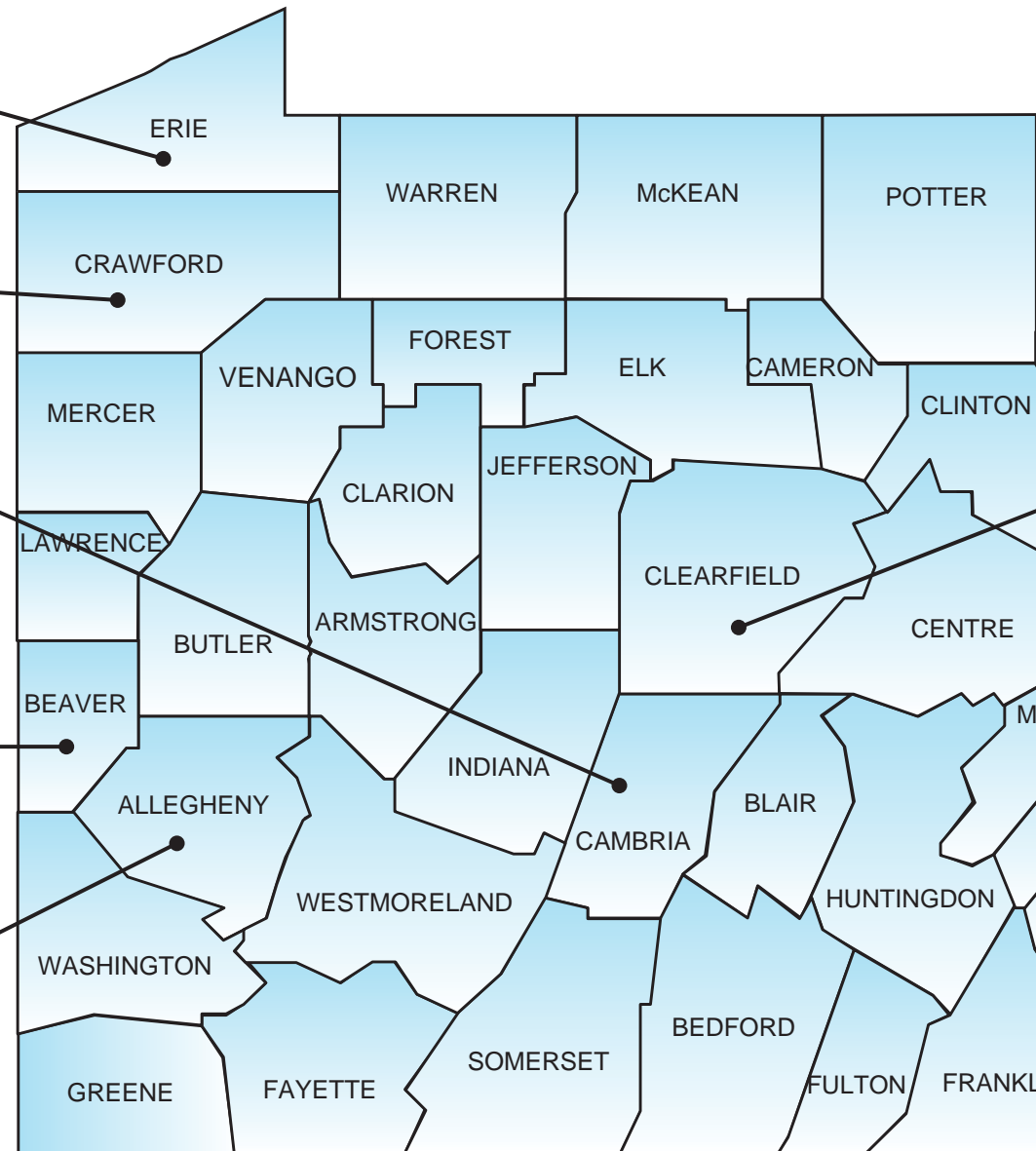
School District of the City of Erie - Woodrow Wilson Middle School
A bullying prevention program
\$10,000

Diocese of Erie - Seton Catholic School
The Dance Around the World for Fitness and Fun program
\$4,950

Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown - Bishop McCort Catholic High School
Cardiovascular equipment for the physical education program
\$10,000

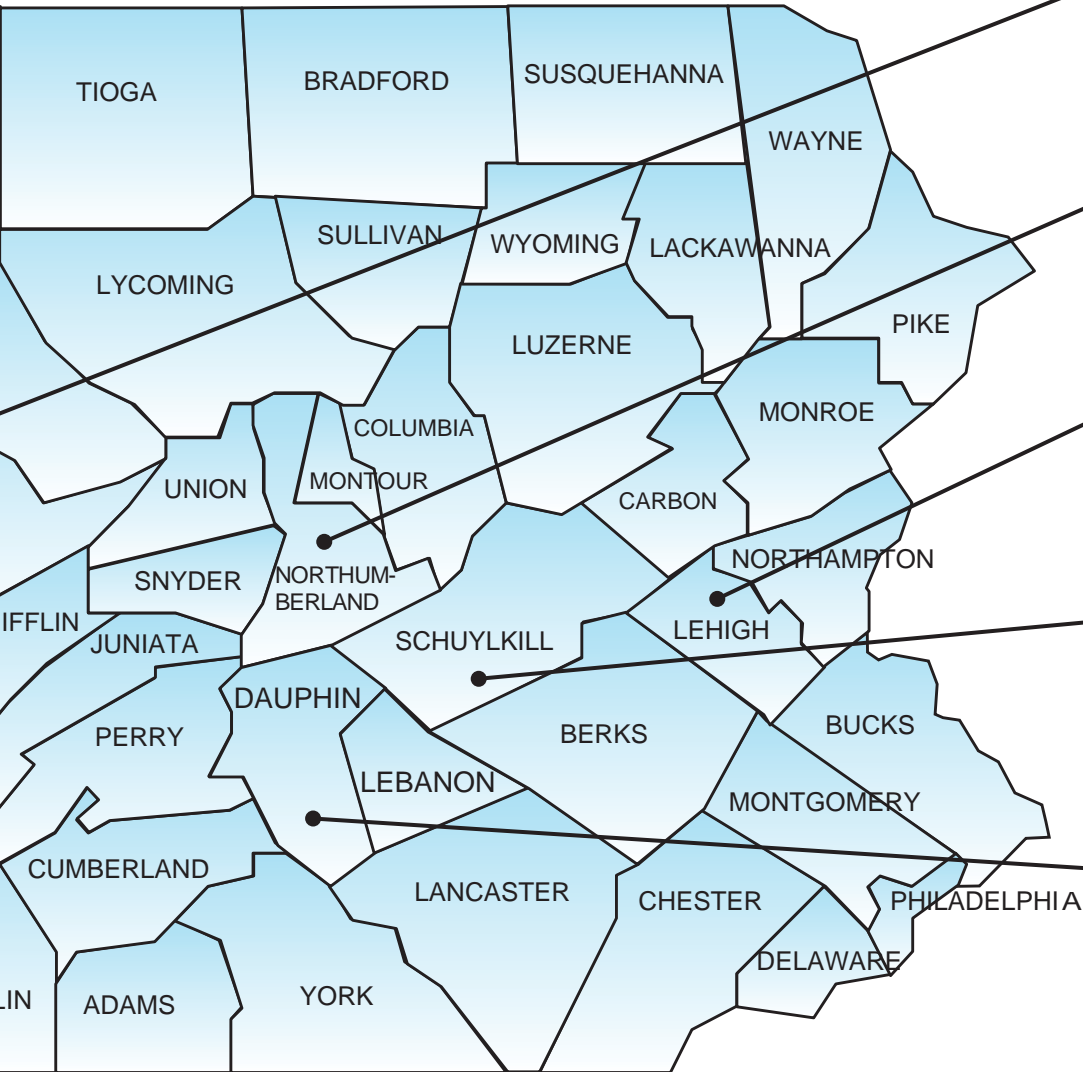
New Brighton Area School District - New Brighton Area Elementary School
Nutrition program materials and Dance Dance Revolution physical education equipment
\$4,345

Pittsburgh Public School District - Pittsburgh Colfax K-8
A handicap-accessible playground
\$10,000



"The Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program puts grant money right in the hands of schools, creating a direct, positive and powerful impact on the lifelong good health of our kids," says Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett.

PA SCHOOLS SINCE 2007



**Purchase Line School District –
Purchase Line North Elementary**
A bullying prevention program
\$3,030

**Milton Area School District –
James F. Baugher Elementary School**
An after-school fitness program
\$3,950

**Salisbury Township School District –
Harry S. Truman Elementary School**
A nutrition awareness program
\$4,015

**Minersville Area School District –
Minersville Jr./Sr. High School**
*Equipment to enhance the cardio-
fitness program*
\$9,967

**Lower Dauphin School District –
Nye Elementary School**
*The G.Y.M.
(Get Youth Moving) program*
\$9,757

Dancing Their Way to Fitness

At West Creek Hills Elementary, Chris Skaugen’s goal is to get students exercising 30 minutes each day. Sure, there is recess, and physical education – the standard stuff. But he wanted something more.

Using a Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant, West Creek bought Dance Dance Revolution equipment for physical education and for teachers to use in the classroom as opportunity arises. “Without Highmark Healthy High 5,” Skaugen says, “I don’t believe we could have provided this to the students.”

Dance Dance Revolution is fun, rhythmic – and a trifle complicated. So when Skaugen began using it, he was concerned about the students’ varying abilities. “I was a little bit worried about how they would follow it,” he says. But the students like it so much, and try so hard, that improvements in coordination are observed in all students, regardless of physical or academic ability. “When a student is impacted this way,” he says, “that’s great.

“What’s more,” Skaugen adds, “I would expect the girls to catch on and enjoy the dancing. But, because of the video game and competitive aspects, the boys are equally enthusiastic about participation.”

Dance Dance Revolution has been such a success that kids want to play at home with their parents. “They’ve changed their minds about exercise,” Skaugen says, “because they’re doing things they like.

“When parents ask where they can buy Dance Dance Revolution,” he adds, “I know that a child’s interest in physical activity has improved.” ■

school building – primarily for physical education and wellness programs – where it can have
ia’s Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

Families Find Healing at the Highmark Caring Place in Harrisburg



Left to right are Drew Johnson, Nick Johnson, Rhonda Johnson and Linda Schmiedel, who lost grandfather, father and husband Ronald Schmiedel in 2007. The Johnsons turned to the Highmark Caring Place for grief support and healing.

“The phone call was hard,” Rhonda Johnson recalls. The mother of Drew, 11, and Nick, 9, was coping with the abrupt death of her father, Ronald Schmiedel, on April 10, 2007. “I wasn’t ready to talk about it. But when I called the Highmark Caring Place, Cindy Garfinkel, the family services coordinator, made it easy. When I broke down and cried she waited until I was able to talk. She let me take my time. It was comforting and very helpful.”

Since 1997, the Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, has served more than 30,000 family members and community partners at its facilities in Lemoyne, Pittsburgh and Erie. A fourth location, in Warrendale, is opening this spring.

“One out of every 20 kids will have a parent die before he or she is out of high school,” the Highmark Caring

Place’s Garfinkel says. “When you’re one of those kids, you feel that no one understands. You need peer support.”

“My father’s death was very unexpected,” Mrs. Johnson recalls. “The boys spent a lot of time with him, fishing, doing arts and crafts and sleeping over.” Drew, quiet and reserved, didn’t want to talk about his grandpa’s death. Nick, more outgoing, was the opposite. Confused and concerned by the different reactions, and grieving herself, Mrs. Johnson brought her sons to the Highmark Caring Place that September “to see if they were normal,” she recalls.

Nick liked the dinners and the air hockey; Drew, the arts and crafts. “I learned that it’s okay to express your feelings,” Drew says. “It’s okay to miss someone and cry.”

For the Johnsons, the Highmark Caring Place has been so beneficial they’ve

continued on for additional support following their initial 10-meeting session. “The kids have made friends here with other kids their age who went through what they had,” Mrs. Johnson says. “And I like the feeling we get when we come here. Somebody cares about how we’re doing. We get that every time we walk through the door.” ■

How to help a grieving child

- Let him know that he is not alone in his grief.
- Encourage her to share her feelings, memories and experiences.
- Make him aware that what he is going through is natural and normal.
- Let her know that hope and healing are possible.
- Provide him with the support of family and peers.
- Realize that she may feel more fearful one year after the death than right away.
- Understand that he may feel a lower sense of self-worth two years after the death.
- Understand that the only way through grief is to grieve. Allow the time, the space and the places to grieve.
- Visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org for more information about grieving support for children.

THE FREE, INTERACTIVE, ONLINE WAY to be healthy!

Being healthy is lots of fun. And learning to be healthy can also be tons of fun! Especially when it’s free, it’s interactive and it involves lots of games and activities – including award-winning online innovation and design.

That’s the approach taken by the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center in York, Pa., Highmark Healthy High 5’s partner in creating www.LearntobeHealthy.org, a leading online resource for health education. The resource provides teachers with free, standards-based lesson plans and students with free educational

games and activities – all focused around making healthy choices.

A national award-winning program, LearntobeHealthy.org has been utilized by more than 2,800 educators and 235,000 students in 444 school districts across the Highmark Foundation service area. A study has shown that students performed significantly better on a knowledge test of nutrition after completing the site’s nutrition curriculum as part of their health class.

“The goal of the site is to teach and inspire students and families to make healthy choices. We hope to complete the circle of learning so that students are encouraged to be healthy at school, home and in the community setting,” says Marcia Meehan, president and chief executive officer of the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center.

“Staying healthy isn’t about starting a new diet or fitness regime... it should really be a way of life,” Meehan explains. “And LearntobeHealthy.org is committed to continually expanding and refreshing its engaging activities, promising to bring its visitors back again and again for new information and activities related to lifelong health.” ■

Visit the site today!
www.LearntobeHealthy.org



“T.R.U.E. Cards...Life Lessons” Available Free



by the Heartwood Institute, leaders in creating educational materials for children that help them to develop a basic moral framework.

The 49 T.R.U.E. Cards introduce students to seven core attributes: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love. Typically, teachers introduce the cards to students and have them write what the quotes mean to them for discussion with their classmates.

Best of all, the packages of “T.R.U.E. Cards...Life Lessons” were provided free of charge to more than 2,000 schools in the Highmark Foundation’s 49-county service area. More than a quarter of the schools have requested additional sets of cards, and surveys of educators show that 80 percent find the cards to be valuable and would recommend them to others. They’re still available free of charge, by request, to every public, charter and private school located in the Highmark Foundation’s service area.

“The full package includes the 49 beautifully illustrated cards, detailed instructions, an attribute poster and a training DVD for using the package in educational or home settings,” explains Chris Sandvig, executive director of The Heartwood Institute, the partner in the program. “The T.R.U.E. Cards program is intended to inspire learning and conversation around the seven core attributes, and it’s aligned with Pennsylvania’s academic standards in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening.” ■

For information or to request T.R.U.E. Cards, visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org.

Highmark Healthy High 5
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Examples of How It Works

- In their schools, students learn about the adverse health, social and educational effects of **bullying** through the Olweus Program, which applies 25 years of experience in bullying prevention to achieve 20–70 percent reductions in student reports of being bullied or bullying others.
- At the Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, **grieving children and their caregivers** find healing through a program based on peer-group support.

With four locations throughout the state, the Caring Place has reached more than 30,000 children, families and community partners. The Highmark Foundation is extending the reach of the Caring Place by partnering with additional facilities across the state that are replicating the program to reach even more families.

“More than 1 million kids across Pennsylvania have benefited from Highmark Healthy High 5 since its introduction in 2006.”

Yvonne Cook, President, Highmark Foundation

- Through school challenge grants, Pennsylvania schools are challenged to implement innovative new **fitness and wellness programs** with outcome-based goals. Schools have

acquired spinning bikes, climbing walls, Dance Dance Revolution, yoga mats, mountain bikes and even snowshoes.

“Through Highmark Healthy High 5, we’re directly addressing kids’ prevailing health problems such as obesity and bullying, working to help reverse negative health trends,”

concludes Cook. “And we’re helping kids learn about positive healthy behaviors that will enable them to enjoy longer, healthier lives than generations before.” ■

Accomplished Through Strong Partnerships

Highmark Healthy High 5 is delivered to our kids predominantly through strong partnership programs. Our partners are experts in delivering proven, evidence-based programs that include training, educational materials and a variety of creative, hands-on learning experiences. Partners and programs include:

- **SPARK Active Recreation**, in support of noncompetitive after-school and physical recreation programs
- **InnerLink, Inc.**, contracted to create **Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools**, in support of school wellness policies and programs
- **Windber Research Institute**, in support of **Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!® – A Bullying Prevention Program**
- **PA CARES**, made available through the Center for Safe Schools, in support of training educators in bullying prevention
- **Highmark Healthy High 5 Bullying Prevention Institute** in support of training educators in bullying prevention
- **Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families**, in support of grieving families
- **Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center**, creator of **LearntobeHealthy.org**, in support of lifelong healthy choices
- **The Heartwood Institute**, creator of **Highmark Healthy High 5 “T.R.U.E. Cards... Life Lessons.”** in support of moral character development and self-esteem
- **Penn State Hershey Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion**, creator of **nrg Powered by Choice**, in support of student-initiated nutrition and fitness programs
- **KidShape®**, a weight-management program for children

Empowering Teens to Employ Their Own Ideas Promoting Good Health



Ultimate Frisbee fundraisers are one way teens work through nrg to fund their own healthy programs in their schools and communities.

The nrg Powered by Choice campaign, funded by Highmark Healthy High 5, empowers teens, ages 13–18, to promote nutrition and physical activity to their peers and younger children. Teens can also hold a fundraising event to purchase equipment that will make a healthy change in their school or community recreation center. The program was developed by Highmark Healthy High 5 partner, the Penn State Hershey Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion.

More than 200 schools serving 100,000-plus students have received kits from the center and Highmark Healthy High 5 to promote healthy living and implement a healthy change in their school or community. In one year's time, the schools participat-

ing in nrg are seeing a 2 to 3 percent reduction in population of overweight and obese students – very encouraging preliminary results.

Teens! Develop your very own healthy program through nrg.

Through nrg Powered by Choice, one Pennsylvania school raised \$1,400 for equipment for its physical education program. The students there hosted an nrg Ultimate Frisbee® Tournament fundraiser.

More than 240 students participated.

Some other ideas? A student council could rally the student body to fund-raise for a climbing wall for physical education classes.

Or a student activity group could hold an event to fund-raise for a healthy vending machine to be installed at school.

“The possibilities are endless,” says Allison Topper, executive director of the center. “And nrg Powered by Choice provides teens with the framework needed to lead the movements to create a healthier tomorrow for today's youth.” ■

Visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org for more information on nrg Powered by Choice.

Taking the Fear Out of Growing Up continued from page 3

individual, classroom, schoolwide and community levels in support of bullying prevention.

HALT! includes a program for teens and onsite technical assistance. PA CARES is run by the Center for Safe Schools, which is the Pennsylvania Department of Education's agency that is responsible for school safety.

In addition, through the Highmark Healthy High 5 Bullying Prevention Institute, the Highmark Foundation provides professional development training to increase the skill level of those adults involved in bullying prevention, emphasizing best practice solutions and awarding participants with continuing education credits. Currently, more than 1,200 school personnel have attended the Institute's sessions.

The initiative is timely because Pennsylvania schools were required by Jan. 1, 2009, to adopt bullying prevention policies. “The Highmark Healthy High 5 initiative is leading the way in providing schools in our state with the funding, support and training to comply with an amendment to the school code that requires all Pennsylvania public school districts to adopt a bullying prevention policy in 2009,” says Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

After all, bullying prevention is crucial to good overall physical health, and especially to success in school. “Safe school environments are critical to the academic success of students,” says Matthew Masiello, M.D., architect of the Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT! program. “If students are worried about their safety in school, their focus gets diverted, making it exceedingly difficult to succeed academically.” ■

Visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org.

Funding Schools' Wish Lists continued from page 4

“The Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program puts grant money right in the school building – primarily for physical education and wellness programs – where it can have a direct, positive and powerful impact on the lifelong good health of our kids,” offers Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

For example, in 2008, many schools used their grants to purchase the Dance, Dance Revolution program. Others have purchased climbing walls, snowshoes or mountain bikes. Some have purchased exercise bikes, step-pers, treadmills or elliptical machines.

One school developed an after-school Hip Hop dance program, while another constructed a quarter-mile oval walking track. One school implemented a nutrition program that included the planting of a vegetable garden. And another taught nutrition through a “Kids in the Kitchen” cooking program.

“The schools are creative and very forward thinking about how to continue to advance healthy behaviors among their students, and we're now able to develop guidelines on best practices from the program,” adds Kweilin Nassar, Highmark Healthy High 5's project director. “If it's new, different or trendy, all the better to engage the kids. And healthy kids are academically successful kids.” ■

Suggest that your school applies for a school challenge grant. Visit www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org.

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