

## **“Choose Health for Life” Program Targets Three Pillars of Healthy Living**



Be active, eat right, and keep tobacco-free. These three pillars of healthy living are the centerpiece of a new program in Beauregard Parish schools – “Choose Health for Life.”

The program is part of the in the Schools Putting Prevention to Work (SPPW) initiative.

Beauregard Parish is one of 27 school districts in the state to receive the grant to decrease tobacco use and obesity in Louisiana’s youth.

“The grant was issued for school systems to implement a comprehensive school wellness policy to prevent initiation of tobacco use and to reduce obesity through nutrition promotion and increased physical fitness for our youth,” explained supervisor Steve Newsom.

The grant is being implemented by a joint effort of the Physical Fitness Department, the Child Nutrition Department, and the Nursing staff in Beauregard Parish.

In addition to regular physical fitness classes, sports programs, and health-related education and activities offered in the schools, the grant will focus on targeted fitness and nutrition programs that help students and the community engage in a more active lifestyle.

Through the grant, the district has purchased pedometers, heart rate monitors, body mass index scales, stop watches and other materials used to promote physical fitness. Each school’s physical education department will implement targeted programs to encourage a more active lifestyle both during and after school for students and their families.

Programs like the Pine Wood “Fun Run” are being adopted across the parish.

The “Log It” program, implemented at several schools last year, allows students to log the number of miles they run or walk during a set period of time. Individual students as well as classes compete against each other to see who can log the highest number of miles during the weeks of the competition. Students are rewarded for completing the greatest number of miles. Winning classes are rewarded with activities like a “Water Party” where students participate in outdoor water games.

The “Jump In” program is another fun activity that promotes physical fitness through teaching students various jump rope skills and games. Students are encouraged to involve their parents in some of the jump rope activities at home.

Tobacco-free living is encouraged through “Life Skills Lessons,” a series of lessons encouraging healthy choices pertaining to drugs and alcohol.

To promote healthy nutrition choices, Pine Wood students participated in taste testing during P.E. classes. Students were provided a variety of healthy food choices to taste as an encouragement to replace healthy snacks for high calorie, low nutrition choices.

Plans are being made to provide all P.E. staff with professional development encouraging each school to develop similar “Choose Health for Life” programs that address the goal of growing a healthier school and community.

“Students who eat healthy food, abstain from harmful practices like tobacco use, and who exercise regularly are also better prepared for the rigors of study in the classroom,” explained Newsom. “Healthy bodies produce healthy minds, and improved physical health contributes to improved academic performance. As we teach our students to ‘Choose Health for Life,’ we are helping create a better, stronger, healthier Louisiana for our future.”

The grant was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Tobacco Control Program and the Louisiana School Boards Association.

*This article published by the BPSB Public Information Office, August 2011.*