

Well-Informed

Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation | Community Benefit Report | Fall 2012



School's in Session and Being Healthy is Making the Grade

Over the past nine years, the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation has awarded \$4,525,626 in grant dollars to the school districts, both public and private, in its service area. It is an investment that has proven to be the backbone of making positive and permanent change in the health and wellness of the communities supported by the Foundation.

Dave Kraybill, Executive Director of the Foundation comments, "Our partnerships with the school districts, their administration and their students have already demonstrated that the power of collaboration is the catalyst for change. These successes have encouraged our school partners to consistently put together new and exciting programs for us to fund."

At the top of the school partner list are the seven superintendents that lead the charge to infuse health and wellness initiatives into the school environment. The Foundation took the opportunity before the '12-'13 school year started to chat with

these leaders: Dr. Dion Betts, Boyertown; Dr. Michael Christian, Owen J. Roberts; Dr. David Goodin, Spring-Ford; Dr. Brad Landis, Pottsgrove; Dr. Reed Lindley, Pottstown; Dr. Gary Otto, Daniel Boone; and Dr. Clifford Rogers, Perkiomen Valley. We thank them for their time and insights.

The first question the Foundation asked was, "Why are you supportive of health and wellness initiatives in your district and how do you feel they are making a difference?"

Dr. Betts: It is important that schools focus on student achievement and well-being. We believe in furthering the development of the whole child. The health and wellness initiatives are making a big difference, and you can hear staff and students talking about healthy living practices.

Dr. Christian: Creating opportunities for students to become more healthful and conscious of their well-being equates to a

more well-rounded student who is more academically successful and accomplished.

Dr. Goodin: The positive impact of exercise on overall brain function is a growing area of research. Initial findings support strong correlations between student learning and physical activity. That being the case, it is imperative that students maintain healthy levels of activity, which in turn helps students with academics.

Dr. Landis: Healthy children learn better and are absent from school less. It is important to give students the habits and routines for healthy living while they are young, so this becomes a positive pattern as they grow into adults.

Dr. Lindley: The Foundation's initiatives are typically thoughtful with the end user in mind. Their projects require some measure of accountability that permit the user to make adjustments if necessary.

Dr. Otto: Our programs continue to enhance current wellness-related initiatives through meaningful community partnerships to create an effective wellness environment. Our goal is to get students, parents and other family members involved in practicing and adopting healthy eating and physical activity habits.

Dr. Rogers: Health impacts all areas of one's life. The state of a student's health and well-being can often affect his or her readiness to learn in the classroom. To do well, we must be ready to engage our students with enthusiasm and care. This is better done when we are healthy and fit.

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a message from our director



Dear Community,

“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.” These wise words from Henry Ford reiterate that learning is a life-long process and it is never too late to learn something—in fact, it’s recommended!

The Foundation encourages learning on all levels, especially when it comes to health and wellness. One of the best ways to stay healthy is through knowledge—knowledge is power. Know what foods are best for you, what foods help prevent disease and what your exercise options are in your area. (Of course, a great resource is www.missionhealthyliving.org.) By taking control of your own health, you are in a better position to teach others—including your family.

The best teachers lead by example. Consider choosing to be a health and wellness “agent of change” within your community. Maybe you can start a walking club in your neighborhood. What about a healthy gourmet dinner club with friends? Are you able to volunteer to teach tennis or golf to kids? Whatever your idea, now is the time to act and take the steps to make positive healthy changes happen.

I also encourage you to learn about the issues facing health and wellness during this election year. Again, knowledge is power that you can use to make decisions. Whatever you decide, decide to act on making changes toward a more healthful you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David W. Kraybill".

David W. Kraybill, Executive Director

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Next we asked the superintendents, “To date, what is one specific health and wellness program in your district that you are proud of?”

Dr. Betts: We are very proud of the work going on in regard to movement, brain development and student achievement.

Dr. Christian: The Fit for Life program and the gardens in the courtyards. It’s exciting to see the students harvest the food, make a dish and taste and eat food they’ve actually grown.

Dr. Goodin: We have many initiatives designed to keep students active, including walking clubs in our elementary schools.

Dr. Landis: Our Fuel Up to Play 60 initiative, which encourages youth to eat healthy and move more, our nutritional samples for students to try, our student physical challenges and our first health fair.

Dr. Lindley: The Healthy Snack program and our ability to hire a part-time wellness coordinator to help promote, coordinate and implement activities for students and staff that promote an active and healthy lifestyle.

Dr. Otto: In 2011-2012, all of our elementary schools earned the distinction of being recognized as one of six districts in Pennsylvania whose elementary schools earned the Bronze Award in the US Healthier School Challenge Program.



Dr. Rogers: We are proud of our Seed to Snack program funded by the Perkiomen Valley Education Foundation. The students were exposed to a variety of foods they might not otherwise have tried, and they also learned ways to incorporate healthy foods into their snacks and meals.

Finally, we wanted to find out, “What do you do personally to maintain good health and wellness?”

Dr. Betts: Personally, I stay informed about ways to combat stress, eating well and movement.

Dr. Christian: I head to my local YMCA and swim in the mornings. It makes me feel great and helps clear my mind for the day. I also get plenty of exercise chasing after my three young children.

Dr. Goodin: To maintain my own health and wellness, I regularly walk between buildings when possible, as well as a regular walking program during my free time.

Dr. Landis: I walk five miles a day and I ride my bike several times per month. I also try to eat healthy lunches and dinners.

Dr. Lindley: Weights and aerobic exercise in the morning prior to the work day as much as possible.

Dr. Otto: I belong to a gym and exercise as my time allows. I also work a lot around my yard and home and play golf on a regular basis. I watch my weight carefully and strive to maintain a healthy balance in my diet. I also try to keep a positive attitude around life.

Dr. Rogers: I do my best to eat in a healthy way. I worked with a nutritionist to remove some old eating habits and introduce healthier choices, and the results show. I also ride my bicycle on the weekends around the area.

Brookeside Montessori Students “Grow Up Fit”

Emily is now able to keep up with the “big kids.” Being an active pre-school student, Emily likes to run and jump with her older sister. However, her physical abilities did not allow her to do so because a few of her motor skills were underdeveloped.

Wee Workout, part of the Growing Up Fit program, provided Emily with the personalized attention needed to help her improve her jumping and balancing skills. She has now mastered these skills and is able to keep up with her sister and the other “big kids” in the school.

The successes Emily achieved as a result of the Wee Workout program also helped her develop greater self-confidence, which enabled her to evolve into a leader in her pre-school classroom.

According to Emily’s mother, she has brought her new-found leadership role into their home by teaching the family about the importance of exercise and healthy eating.

Wee Workout is one component of the Growing Up Fit program at [Brookeside Montessori](#), located at 1075 Route 100, Bechtelsville.

“Our grant from the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation has allowed us to expand our “healthy foods/healthy bodies” curriculum. We now have a garden to grow our own vegetables, which we then use in our weekly cooking projects. Our children are learning the importance of healthy foods and lots of exercise.”

Robin John, Head of School



Pope John Paul II Students are Getting Fit

Students at [Pope John Paul II \(PJPII\)](#) are taking advantage of the variety of exercise equipment available to them in their Physical Education (PE) classes, during free periods and after school. Equipment such as a recumbent bike, total body arc trainer, elliptical machine and weights made the move from the former St. Pius X High School to the new Royersford location of PJPII High School. Fitness steps, stability ball, pedometers and heart rate monitors round out the fitness center’s offerings.

According to Bryan Wilson, Chair of the Health and Physical Education Department, “The fitness equipment is incorporated in the PE classes for all of our students. We are also excited to see many students using the facilities on their own time as they strive to improve their personal health and well-being. Personal Fitness, Core Stability and Stretch classes are offered to provide a variety of options to the students.”

The equipment’s popularity does not stop there. Athletes use the facilities for regular workouts and reconditioning due to sports injuries, and faculty and staff hit the gym for regular workouts as well.

Members of the entire PJPII family are on board with “getting fit.”





Coventry Christian School Students Make the Switch

Unhealthy lunches are a thing of the past at [Coventry Christian Schools \(CCS\)](#). The school has made the necessary changes to qualify for federal funding through the USDA in School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children, and the students are enjoying the benefits.

Healthier lunch options, such as turkey tacos on whole grain tortillas, baked potatoes with ham and cheese, whole grain pasta with meat sauce, and chicken parmesan with whole grain pasta were introduced during the 2011/2012 school year in an effort to replace the traditional high-salt, high-fat lunch items. According to Mr. Paul Fisher, Acting Headmaster, "The initial response to this change was unfavorable among the students who typically bought the school lunch. However, once they had time to

adjust and learn about the benefits of the healthy changes, the orders increased for the healthier options."

Not one negative comment was made when polled at the beginning of this new school year. Elementary students enthusiastically commented about the new lunch options. Kaitlyn H. "Loves it;" Isabella R. stated the new program is "outstanding," Chase expressed her feelings as "Epic!" Ashwin said, "It is 'sooo tasty!'" Logan felt we "over-did it."

Lunch room volunteers had similar enthusiasm. Amy H., a volunteer for 11 years, stated that she never hears anything negative about the new choices. Valerie O., another veteran lunch mom, stated, "I am so glad we are serving healthy alternatives rather than junk." Mrs. O., wife of a local

physician said, "It's great—the kids like it and I like it." The only down side heard from older secondary students is that portion sizes are sometimes too small.

Educational programming in the classroom and literature distributed to the parents were influential components in the school's decision to make the switch. Seventy-six percent of the students have chosen to "go healthy."

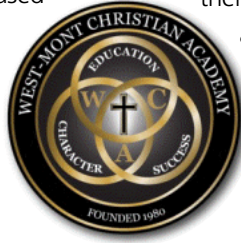
"With the initial obstacles removed," stated Fisher, "the students will continue to have the healthy lunch options available in the 2012/2013 school year."



West-Mont Christian Academy Serves up “Healthy”

Healthy snacks are on the menu at [West-Mont Christian Academy \(WCA\)](#). During the past school year, healthy fruits, vegetables and whole grain snacks were purchased and provided to the students as a healthy alternative. As part of the learning experience, students were taught the nutritional value of a snack, and then picked their favorite to highlight in the parent newsletter. Nutritional facts were published along with the percentage of likes and dislikes for the specific snack. This information prompted many parents to purchase the nutritious food options to have available in their homes.

Planting vegetables from seed was another component of providing healthy snack options at WCA. The elementary students



enjoyed the “hands-on” experience of planting the seeds and transplanting the seedlings to larger pots, which were then taken to their greenhouse and eventually moved to raised beds. The plants matured into fresh green beans, sugar snap peas, spinach and peas. After harvesting, the veggies were prepared and served for taste-testing. Healthy recipes using these ingredients were shared with parents, and were also prepared and served at the annual Family Fun & Fitness Night.

“We are pleased the parents are willing to reinforce the healthy snack options taught at WCA,” remarked Dr. James Smock, School Administrator, “as it is vital to their children developing healthy habits that will evolve into healthy lifestyles.”

“I have two examples of how the health and wellness initiatives have impacted our school. The first is our new Health & Wellness Council, comprised of staff and parents, which meets on a regular basis to continually review and monitor our H & W offerings. The second example is of an elementary student who sampled the asparagus offered during healthy snack. She then went home and asked mom to buy some and serve it at dinner. The entire family tried it for the first time and liked it enough to have it again that week! This would not have happened without that initial snack offering.”

Dr. James Smock, School Administrator

Wyndcroft Students are “Cooking For Real”



“Our students have fully embraced the new Fresh and Local Fridays program. Healthier snack choices are making their way into student lunch boxes and parents report that recipes served at school are re-created at home. We are pleased with the awareness this program has brought to our students about taking charge of health and wellness in their daily lives.”

Gail L. Wolter, Head of School

Students at The [Wyndcroft School](#) are getting into the act and are “cooking for real.” Hands-on experience through the school year provided them with the opportunity to create and make their own healthy snack creations. The recipes were posted on the school’s website to share with fellow students and families.

The Cooking For Real program has made the students aware of the source of the food, in addition to the cost associated with healthy choices. “This new knowledge assists the kids in making healthy choices and has influenced their choices of snacks brought from home,” commented Allison Carr, School Nurse.

According to Carr, this is evident through a questionnaire completed by 177 students during the 2011/2012 school year. Ninety-six percent of the students were interested in learning how to make healthy snacks, and 80% of the students were willing to try new foods. They are now aware of what food groups to eat (no, potato chips are not a healthy option), and how to read labels (avoid ingredients like high fructose corn syrup).

Parent involvement at Wyndcroft was a key component to the success of Cooking For Real and provides reinforcement to the healthy lifestyle within the homes.

Collaborative efforts with [St. Aloysius Parish School](#), [Owen J. Roberts School District](#), and [Jack’s Farm](#) were also instrumental in providing a quality program, and will provide the opportunity to have a greater positive impact on the community in the future.

St. Al's Takes Steps to Being Healthy

Students at [Saint Aloysius Parish School](#) know what it takes to be healthy. This is evident by the “hands-on” opportunities they have during their normal school day. Between planting flats of vegetables and herbs, and weekly fitness opportunities, the students are “planting the seeds” for a healthy lifestyle.



“Steps to a Healthier You” is a program that encompasses all aspects of a healthy lifestyle with a focus on nutrition and fitness. Every year the students plant a variety of veggie and herb seeds at a local greenhouse, which are then distributed to the school’s families for planting in their home gardens. According to Becky Shych, Wellness Coordinator, “The students successfully planted 300 flats this year, and the extra flats were donated to the MOSAIC Lands Trust for planting in the local community garden. We are looking forward to this partnership for years to come.”

www.pottstownfoundation.org



Learning about the herbs and vegetables that are planted is supported by conducting monthly food tastings. Morning “food fact” announcements are part of the daily curriculum, followed up by a monthly trivia contest to help generate interest in their new-found nutrition knowledge. Field trips, such as visiting a local grocery store, and assemblies on topics such as grain, have been identified as some of the students’ favorites.

The fitness component of a healthy lifestyle is also taught at St. Al’s. Plenty of opportunities are available for the students to be active. All students participated in Walk on Wednesdays, where they tracked an average of 27,500 feet during a trimester. A new after-school yoga class was well received and is expected to be continued this fall. Fitness opportunities are rounded out with jump-rope endurance and an annual Valley Forge Walk.

St. Al’s students are taking real steps to a healthy lifestyle.

“I am so thrilled that Saint Aloysius Parish School is involved in the Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation. Our number one priority in our schools today should be to teach our children lessons that they will be able to use throughout life. As we move forward, the benefits from the Health & Wellness grant are definitely with life-long skills in mind. The Pottstown Health & Wellness grant has given us the opportunity to extend to our students and staff programs, equipment and educational opportunities that would not be available without the support of the grant.”

Jack Schulte, Principal

board profile



Kenneth Picardi: Board President

Kenn Picardi joined the Foundation’s board in 2005, hit the ground running, and has not stopped since. He has served on the grants committee, executive committee and the governance committee. This past July, however, he assumed the role of board president and hopes to continue the charge to put Pottstown on the map for being one of the most healthful places to live.

“We really have a chance to make a difference in our community,” comments Picardi. “Pottstown has a unique opportunity to get on the map as an area with a great quality of life and enough healthy activities and support programs to be ahead of the curve in fighting diabetes, heart disease and obesity.”

Picardi is proud of the Foundation’s accomplishments to date, including Community Health and Dental Care, improved trails and parks, and school partnerships. He knows, however, that there are many more avenues to explore to move the prevention dial even more, and he is committed to furthering the impact of the Foundation during his tenure.

“We are able to invest heavily in our 10-mile service area, and our efforts will keep building a healthy community and increasing the quality of life. I love being able to work collaboratively and give organizations the dollars—I am fully vested in our mission and know we are doing all the right things to make change happen.”

In his spare time, Picardi enjoys riding his bike with the Sunnybrook Bicycle Club and spending time with his wife and two adult sons.

POTTSTOWN EARLY ACTION FOR KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Every child in Pottstown will enter kindergarten ready to learn and achieve.*

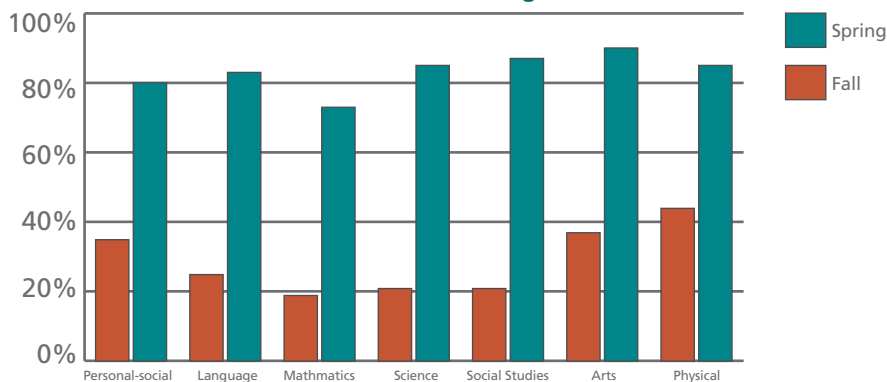
PEAK is an initiative that focuses on improving school readiness. Short for "Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness," PEAK's mission is for all children entering kindergarten to be ready to learn and achieve. PEAK partners with a wide variety of organizations and early learning sites in the community that support the importance of early education. Through these partnerships, PEAK has achieved several major outcomes for the 2011-2012 school year, including:

- Attendance reached 600 at community outreach event
- Increased parent classroom volunteer time by 77%
- Pre-K Counts students scored as "proficient" across six learning domains over 80% of the time
- Pre-K Counts families rated PEAK's family support services as good or excellent 98% of the time

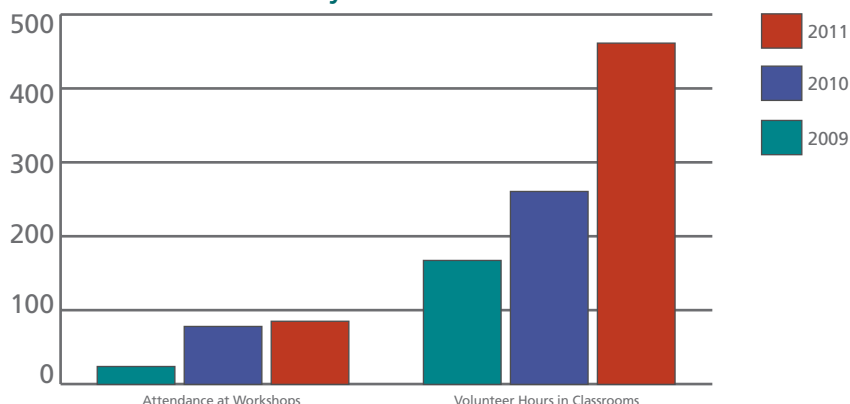


(*2012 Annual Meeting)

Pre-K Counts Students Scoring Proficient



Family Involvement



Hold The Date!

Fall School Collaborative

When: Thursday, November 8, 2012
3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Where: Pottstown Middle School

Additional information to follow.

Questions? Contact Anna Brendle
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"Foundations of Life" Blog with Dr. Laurie Betts

Find inspiration and advice by following Dr. Betts as she discusses family life, exercise, nutrition, and more. She covers topics everyone can relate to, so join in the conversation and share your successes and your challenges.

[Click here](#) to follow Dr. Betts today!



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