

President Bill Clinton Honors 179 U.S. Schools For Combating Childhood Obesity

Alliance for a Healthier Generation Recognizes Schools for Increasing Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

NEW YORK, June 15 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, today recognized 179 schools that have transformed their campuses into healthier places for students and staff.

President Bill Clinton, American Heart Association Chairman Neil Meltzer, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation President and CEO Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey presented awards during an event in New York City.

The 179 schools hail from across the country, though the cities of Atlanta; Birmingham, Ala.; Boston; Lincoln, Neb.; Los Angeles; Miami; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; and San Antonio all boast multiple awardees. Many of the schools have diverse student populations, and more than two-thirds are located in lower-income communities. Each has distinguished itself with healthy eating and physical activity programs and policies that meet or exceed stringent standards set by the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program.

"The 179 schools earning recognition today – the most in any year in the Alliance's history – join the ranks of schools from all over the United States that have shown exemplary commitment to the health of their students and staff," President Clinton said. "The Alliance is pleased to assist in these efforts in more than 9,000 schools in all 50 states to make innovative and healthy changes that will turn the tide on childhood obesity."

Among the schools and healthy achievements honored today:

- Memorial High School, in West New York, N.J., made sweeping changes to its cafeteria; increased physical activity for students and staff before, during and after the school day; and required that every student take health and physical education annually. Memorial is the first and only school to earn a Gold National Recognition Award from the Healthy Schools Program.
- Bumpus Middle School, in Hoover, Ala., pulled deep-fat fryers and sports drinks out of its cafeteria and brought in whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, water, and one-percent and nonfat milk.
- Wilkerson Elementary School, in El Monte, Calif., provided physical education training for all classroom teachers regardless of their subject area expertise. School administrators supported this commitment with the purchase of new athletic equipment and encouraged teachers to make physical activity a part of every school day.

"Although the Healthy Schools Program aims to make all schools healthy, it has a special focus on communities most affected by the childhood obesity epidemic," Lavizzo-Mourey said. "The successes celebrated today show how much can be done from the cafeteria to the playground. At these schools, tough budget times and other challenges are no match for the commitment and creativity of administrators, teachers, parents and students."

The Alliance's Healthy Schools Program provides free assistance to more than 9,000 schools nationwide to help them reverse the national epidemic of childhood obesity. Schools are eligible for Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum National Recognition Awards as a result of implementing health-promoting programs. More than 350 National Recognition Awards have been presented to schools since 2006.

"There is no single cause and no single solution to the childhood obesity epidemic, which is why the Healthy Schools Program's comprehensive approach to making substantive changes in the culture of a school is so critical to its success," Meltzer noted.

In addition to the Healthy Schools Program, the Alliance brokers and implements voluntary agreements with industry leaders to provide young people better access to healthier foods, beverages, physical activity and health care. In March 2010, the Alliance announced the results of a three-year effort with the beverage industry to remove full-calorie soft drinks from U.S. schools and replace them with lower-calorie, smaller-portion beverages. That initiative helped to reduce calories from beverages shipped to schools by 88 percent from 2004 to fall 2009.

Earlier this year, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation became a Founding Member of the Partnership for a Healthier America, the independent, nonpartisan organization created to support the goals of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Campaign.

"It is clear that the momentum is building. In the past year, we have seen the Healthy Schools Program grow from 5,000 schools to more than 9,000," said Ginny Ehrlich, executive director of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. "We hope that every person interested in making a difference in the health of a school will join our Healthy Schools Network and become eligible to be nationally recognized for their efforts in future years."

The Healthy Schools Program is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Any U.S. school can enroll and receive free assistance and support to become a healthier place for students to learn and staff to work. Find out more at HealthierGeneration.org.

About the Alliance for a Healthier Generation

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation works to address one of the nation's leading public health threats – childhood obesity. The goal of the Alliance is to reduce the nationwide prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015, and to empower kids nationwide to make healthy lifestyle choices. Founded in 2005 by the American Heart Association and William J. Clinton Foundation, the Alliance works to positively affect the places that can make a difference to a child's health: homes, schools, doctor's offices and communities.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

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