FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Getting Fit is a Family Affair

“Get Fit” night is an event hosted by HSHF staff that encourages parents and kids to be active together. This night takes place once a semester and is made possible through collaboration among the school administration, the PTA and HSHF. Each event consists of stations involving exercises that challenge kids and their parents to work different muscles. Groups rotate through activities such as jump rope, relay races, basketball, and Transition Exercise among others. Parents and students alike also work up a sweat while they learn about the new Food Guide Pyramid at the MyPyramid Activity station. At the Hydration Station, they can cool off with some water and a healthy snack, and pick up some information about healthy eating and being physically active. At the end of the night, all the parents team up with their children for a friendly competition among families. The winning parent and child team receives a healthy lifestyles-themed prize presented by HSHF staff. PS 102 had two Get Fit Nights this past school year, each with over fifty participants. HSHF looks forward to building on last year’s success by hosting additional “Get Fit” nights this year.

Other Initiatives:
The 2007-2008 saw the fifth growing season of the Fresh Food Fresh Start vegetable market at PS/IS 180. The PS/IS 180 PTA took ownership of the market this year. The market continued to feature organic, locally grown produce from Katchkie Farm. In addition, the PTA procured additional high quality, affordable produce to sell at the market. HSHF congratulates the PS/IS 180 PTA and Katchkie farms for helping to improve the access to healthy foods in the Harlem community.
With frequent student to student interaction, poor ventilation systems, and young immune systems, school-aged children are at high risk of contracting an illness. However, research has shown that immunizations are highly effective for strengthening the immune system from specified diseases and improving overall school health. Students who are not in compliance with immunization regulation are excluded from school.

For the fifth consecutive year, over 99% of HSHF students are up to date with immunizations at participating schools, as a result of HSHF outreach and partnership with school staff. The school staff make the list of excludable students available to HSHF. HSHF staff personalizes the DOE warning and exclusionary letters for the specific needs of each provisionary and excludable student in English and Spanish. These letters are followed up by HSHF outreach calls to noncompliance students, providing parents with an opportunity to ask questions about immunization protocol. Often students are out of compliance due to problems with documentation of shots received outside the US.

As a result of this collaboration between HSHF and each school’s front office staff, our schools are healthier and fewer students are needlessly excluded from school.

**Other Initiatives:**

HSHF continued their partnership with WIN for Asthma and the East and Central Harlem District Public Health Office. Together, we referred 386 families of high risk asthmatics to care coordination services. We look forward to providing parent and staff workshops on the swine flu during the 2009-2010 school year.

**HEALTH EDUCATION**

**Pediatricians Teach Kids about Puberty**

2007-2008 parent focus groups and principal interviews identified an unmet health education need felt across all seven HSHF schools: hygiene and puberty lessons for 4th and 5th grade students. HSHF worked with the pediatric residents at Columbia University Community Pediatrics program to develop age-appropriate lessons on hygiene and puberty. Parent permission was obtained, and classes were divided by sex to receive the lesson. Teachers and administrators were very pleased with the lessons, and the schools have made requests to repeat the lessons in the upcoming school year.

**Other Initiatives:**

Students also learn about the Healthy Habit of the Month at biannual nutrition fairs. HSHF works with the school nurse and Asthma Basics for Children to provide an evidence based asthma education to students with asthma.

**COUNSELING, PSYCHOLOGICAL & SOCIAL SERVICES**

Mental health services continue to be among the top needs of schools. Four HSHF schools benefit from the services of the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital school-based psychiatric clinics. Each clinic is staffed by clinicians who treat students with psychological and social disorders. Students are referred by local pediatricians and school staff. This service continues to be very highly valued by the staff at each school.

**Other Initiatives:**

HSHF’s partner, Turn 2 Us, continues to integrate mental health promotion with sports and arts programming at PS 128 and PS 4. The Turn 2 Us organized basketball and softball leagues for at-risk students. Students in the league receive extra mentorship, academic support and are taught how to manage their emotions.

“Without HSHF, there is no way that I would be able to keep all my kids in compliance with immunizations.”

- PS 152, Principal
NUTRITION SERVICES

Students Get a Taste of Nutrition

As part of its nutrition education program, Healthy Schools Healthy Families worked with PS/IS 180, PS 128, and PS 102 cafeteria staff at three HSHF schools this year to introduce students to a variety of different fruits and vegetables as part of the Tasty Science Test. This activity reinforced science concepts learned in the classroom and helped to generate excitement about new fruit and vegetable items on the cafeteria menu.

Students visited the cafeteria and sampled a spread of fresh fruits and vegetables such as peppers, cucumbers, broccoli, apples and bananas. A hands-on lesson was provided to emphasize eating fruits and vegetables at school as well as basic dining etiquette. A second part of the Tasty Science Test incorporated elements of healthy foods into the school science curriculum. After the taste test, the students reviewed science concepts on the state science test related to fruits and vegetables. The students who completed the tasty science lesson were encouraged to tell their peers about these delicious new menu items. When the items appeared on the menu, school aides gave out “I Tried It” stickers to students who ate these vegetables as a part of their school lunch.

HEALTH PROMOTION FOR STAFF

Staff Meet the Challenge to Improve their Health

HSHF works towards improving the health and wellbeing of their schools by reaching out to school staff in addition to the students. This broad approach to wellness helps to form a sense of community and camaraderie among the staff that also translates into a strong support system for the program.

Last spring the HSHF Staff Challenge initiative lasted between 5-8 weeks within four schools, PS 128, 102, 206 and 132. For the duration of the challenge, staff members chose three personal behavior change goals to keep track of each week as well as their time spent being physically active. Logs were collected and points were awarded for progress towards meeting goals and when physical activities were logged. Extra points were awarded if staff members included their classes in wellness activities. PS 128 had their staff divided into teams of two, and the rest of the school’s staff competed individually. As a motivator, HSHF nutritionists offered meetings/counseling sessions to the staff for encouragement.

Prizes for the challenge included fitness tool kits, healthy habits prize packs, and cash prizes. The enthusiasm of the staff throughout the competition made it an exciting time for these school communities.

“Students have been trying different and new foods that they never tried before.” Educational Assistant, PS/IS 180

Other Initiatives:
HSHF also collaborates with the staff from the Office of School Food to promote school breakfast and hold school partnership meetings with students, staff and parents.

Other Initiatives:
HSHF also provides yoga, Pilates and belly dancing classes to staff members. This year PS 206 staff benefited from a special Asthma Friendly Classrooms workshop presented by Asthma Free School Zone.

“I have been eating breakfast, exercising every day, eating fruits and vegetables, drinking a lot of water- in short, I have been making healthier choices because of HSHF!” Teacher, PS 152
The Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and Komansky Center for Children's Health understand that the traditional approach of caring for individual children in practice settings does not adequately address today's threats to children's health. Problems such as obesity and asthma are better addressed by a broader approach—making the community as a whole the focus of attention and understanding children's health needs through the interlinking contexts of biology, family, and community.

Healthy Schools Healthy Families (HSHF) is an elementary school-based health promotion program for medically underserved children in New York City. HSHF identifies and addresses unmet health needs in the school community by partnering with the schools, the surrounding community, local and national stakeholders and private and public sectors. HSHF began in PS 128 in 1999 and is now in six additional schools (PS 4, PS 132, PS 152, PS/IS 180, PS 102 and PS 206), which are located in Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood.

Our goals are to:

- Cultivate a school culture which values physical activity and healthy eating
- Achieve environment and policy change that promotes healthy lifestyles
- Facilitate access to services for children with health needs, with a particular emphasis on children with asthma
- Facilitate insurance enrollment for children and families
- Ensure that 100% of children have completed their required immunizations
- Promote mental wellness for students, parents and staff

HSHF is based on the CDC coordinated school health program model, consisting of the components below:

- **Healthy school environment**: Each school utilizes a social marketing campaign to promote healthy lifestyles using culturally sensitive health messages.
- **Nutrition services**: All schools have a healthy snack policy.
- **Health services**: Over 99% of students are up to date with immunizations as a result of HSHF outreach and partnership with DOE.
- **Counseling, psychological & social services**: Currently, this area is being serviced by our partners Turn 2 Us (PS 4 and PS 128) and Peds Psychiatry at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital (PS 4, PS 128, PS 132 and PS 152)
- **Physical education**: We strive to achieve the required 120 minutes of physical activity per week by promoting in-classroom exercise, active recess, and physical education.
- **Health Education**: Health Report Cards are distributed to all families to further promote healthy lifestyles and family education.
- **Health promotion for Staff**: Staff wellness programs are made available to all schools.
- **Family/Community Involvement**: Each school has an active “Fitness and Nutrition Committee” that meets monthly to set their school’s health and wellness agenda.

HSHF follows a set of principles that informs its implementation: a true partnership model, a public health vision, cultural competency, an ecological approach to health, and a link to existing coalitions in the community. We are striving to create a model program that is replicable, sustainable, evidence based and with measurable outcomes. It is only by combining the skills and resources of the Medical Center with the energy and immense talents of the community and our multiple partners that these goals can be achieved.

Dodi Meyer, MD
Associate Clinical Professor Pediatrics
HSHF Co-Director
No Idling Week

HSHF collaborated with our partners, WIN for Asthma and Asthma Free School Zone, to hold a special ‘No Idling Day’ event, which was attended by local politicians. Program staff and parents joined together to pass out letters and cards encouraging cars to limit idling time in designated school zones in order to improve air quality. The council members spoke about Intro 631, a proposed law to limit engine idling in school zones. This event was covered by NY1 and was mentioned at public hearings and the council chamber vote. Intro 631 was passed into law in early 2009. Students at all HSHF schools celebrated No Idling Week by completing a lesson on idling and asthma which culminated in a car coloring activity. These cars were posted on school doors and windows to remind the community of the dangers of idling. Asthma Free School Zone recognized each HSHF for their efforts in raising awareness of the idling public health issue with framed certificates of appreciation at the WIN for Asthma Graduation in May 2009.

Other Initiatives:

HSHF’s social marketing strategy of the “Healthy Habit of the Month” paired with each school’s Healthy Snack Policy provide students with consistent healthy lifestyle messages ensuring a healthy school environment.

Recess Revival

Recess is an important time for kids to be active and release energy so that they are ready to learn in the classroom. However, many problems such as inclement weather and lack of space or organization prevent kids from getting sufficient movement during this period. HSHF piloted a training program at PS 152 to overcome these hurdles and increase physical activity. Our staff trained the school aides to ensure active recess by engaging kids in organized lap running, kickball, basketball, among other activities. HSHF staff met with the school aides individually to develop a routine that works best for the specific classes each aide supervises. School aides are given materials such as jump ropes and kick balls and are instructed on safely organize games for all students. The school aides are also trained to log the recess time.

The PS 152 school aides increased recess productivity and recorded an average of 32 minutes of physical activity per week. Initially facilitated by two school aides, the fourth and fifth grades began to organize their own basketball games during their recess period. One teacher remarked that she was very impressed with how the games fostered friendships and increased her students’ confidence. These positive effects in the classroom show that engaging students in physical activities allows them to release energy and refocus for the rest of the day. Congratulations to the PS 152 school aides and HSHF staff who worked so hard to create productive recess periods!

“Students are not bored during outside recess anymore!”
Counselor, PS 152

Other Initiatives:

HSHF continued to train teachers and provide resources for physical education. HSHF schools averaged 58 minutes of physical activity each week utilizing activities such as Transition Exercise, dance, Jeter Meter, Tai Chi and yoga.
HSHF exemplifies partnerships working collaboratively to serve the community. Internally, Community Pediatrics/Department of Pediatrics at Columbia University Medical Center, Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital of New York-Presbyterian, Weill Cornell Medical College, and New York-Presbyterian Ambulatory Care Network all collaborate to provide leadership and resources to this program. In addition we have several community partners, as indicated below:

Affinity Health Plans
Asthma Basics for Children
Asthma Free School Zone
CHALK
City Harvest
Community Healthcare Network
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Family PEACE Program
Food Bank for New York City
Katchkie Farms/The Sylvia Center
Punk Rope
New York Road Runners
NYC Department of Education (DOE)
NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, East and Central Harlem District Public Health Office
Turn 2 Foundation
Turn 2 Us
WIN for Asthma

“One student stopped a teacher who had a soda in hand and said he needed to make a better choice of water or orange juice.”
-Literacy Coach, PS/IS 180

Contact Information:
For more information about this partnership, please contact the Program Manager, Melissa Pflugh, MS, RD at 212.342.0713 or mep7006@nyp.org.