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NEWS

Noble Elementary Gets \$9,070 in Grant for New Physical Ed Program

By Staff

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The Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission (ATSC) Friday announced the awards for its Child Wellness Intervention Project Grant Program.

In a ceremony on the second floor rotunda of the Arkansas state capitol, a \$9,070.58 grant was awarded to Noble Elementary by Dr. Joe Thompson, Arkansas Surgeon General, and commissioners of the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Commission.

Tracy Streeter, the principal at Noble, said that the funds will be used to purchase a new physical education curriculum called Sparks and to pay for the training for the curriculum. In addition, she said, the grant funds can also be used to provide all kinds of new equipment for physical education activities including hula hoops, balls, cones and a variety of other items.

According to information from Angie Tubbs, the school nurse, the school will provide at least 120 minutes of physical education activity each week throughout the school year in addition to recess or athletics. Teachers will also provide a minimum of two lessons per week in health classes with an emphasis on tobacco education. Teachers will also attend training sessions on the HealthTeacher curriculum and the Spark program.

More than one-third of Arkansas's public school children are overweight or obese, and Arkansas ranks eighth in the nation for childhood obesity. The commission's CWIP initiative focuses on reducing childhood obesity by increasing physical activity through quality physical education programs and providing critical health education. The commission has partnered with the Arkansas Department of Education's Office of Coordinated School Health, Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH), and the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) to accomplish this goal.

ATSC board chair Susan Hanrahan, PhD, commended the commission for developing this unique partnership. "The CWIP initiative reflects the joint commitment of both traditional and non-traditional partners in improving the health of Arkansas children," she said. "Each of the partner organizations contributes a vital perspective that has helped to shape a program that will have a sustained impact on physical fitness."

The commission awarded \$656,792.01 in grants to 44 individual schools in 28 districts around the state. In the 2011-2012 school year, over 8,500 students will participate in the CWIP program. Dr. Tom Kimbrell applauded the initiative of school personnel and expressed appreciation for the resources provided by ATSC.



Shown are, from left, Fidel A. Samour, ACH project coordinator analyst; Aaron Black, ATSC executive director, Dr. Joe Thompson, Marilyn Chambers of the Hamburg School District; Angie Tubbs and Tracy Streeter of Noble Elementary; Dr. Susan Hanrahan, ATSC commission chair; and Dr. Tom Kimbrell and Dr. Paul Halverson, ATSC commissioners. Photo by Kirk Jordan with the governor's office.

"Educators understand the connection between student achievement and physical well-being," Dr. Kimbrell said. "We are excited about the opportunities these grant funds will provide in helping our students achieve healthier lifestyles."

Funding for this grant came from the Arkansas Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act, an act passed by 64% of Arkansas voters in 2000. This act specified that tobacco settlement funds received by Arkansas should be used exclusively to improve the health of Arkansans through smoking prevention and cessation, increased access to health care and health education, and investment in important medical research.

The CWIP initiative will be evaluated by the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement's (ACHI) Health Data Initiative, led by Dr. Thompson. According to Dr. Thompson, the evaluation will measure several factors expected to be impacted by the program including obesity prevention and academic performance.

"We know that adequate physical activity balanced with good nutrition is a key factor in reversing the childhood obesity epidemic that is robbing our kids of a healthy, productive future," Dr. Thompson said. "There is growing evidence that physical activity also improves academic performance and reduces behavioral problems in schools. Through evaluation of the CWIP program we plan to provide an evidence-based model for other schools to follow."

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