

White River Medical Center and Batesville School District Teaming Up to Improve Children's Health

Batesville, Ark. – Partners In Community Health is a hospital initiative with the business community and education system. The group works to identify areas of need and develop proactive solutions to improve the health of area residents.

Today, almost 38 percent of Arkansas children and adolescents are overweight or at risk for being overweight. These children face an increased risk of developing hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and other life-threatening illnesses as they age. Given these facts, Partners In Community Health has identified childhood obesity as a focus area.

Partners In Community Health has selected HealthTeacher, health education curriculum, as a tool to fight childhood obesity and is partnering with the Batesville School District to introduce the program at the Eagle Mountain Health and International Studies Magnet Elementary and the Sixth Grade Magnet. HealthTeacher is the leading K-12 Health Curriculum utilizing the power of print and the Internet. HealthTeacher will also be used to supplement the current health curriculum in place at Batesville Junior High, Senior High and New Horizons Alternative School. WRMC is providing the funding to bring HealthTeacher to the classroom.

“The health of our children is so important on so many levels,” said Gary Bebow, “Everyone has a responsibility and an important stake in the growing epidemic of obesity; parents, educators and employers. Giving children the knowledge and skills to make the right lifestyle choices with regard to nutrition and exercise will give them a lifetime of good health.”

HealthTeacher is a skills based curriculum developed with guidance from nationally respected health education leaders. HealthTeacher helps student develop both a knowledge base and skills to pursue a healthy lifestyle. HealthTeacher provides both online and print content for teachers and is being used by more than 6,000 schools including New York and Chicago Public School systems.

The HealthTeacher curriculum outlines knowledge and skill expectations consistent with the Assessment Framework and National Health Education Standards for each grade level. It addresses the top six health risk behaviors identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with a holistic approach to providing health education and curriculum.

“We are so pleased to be working with WRMC to enhance our health education,” said Ted Hall, Batesville School Superintendent. “We are fortunate to have community partners like WRMC, who recognize the need and are willing to provide the financial support necessary to bring this program to our schools.”

All schools that participate in the Federal lunch program are required to have a wellness policy in place for the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, the Batesville School district has been selected as one of ten pilot schools in the state to implement “Coordinated School Health”. HealthTeacher will fulfill the health education component of this Coordinated School Health program. The HealthTeacher curriculum allows the district to comply with this mandate.

“HealthTeacher allows our teachers to educate our students and allows us to become a leader in the promotion of healthy lifestyles and proactively fighting childhood obesity,” said Susan Parker, District Health and Wellness Coordinator. The project is being coordinated by Susan Parker, Health and Wellness Coordinator and online training for teachers will begin this week.