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ALLIANCE FOR A HEALTHIER GENERATION NAMES HEALTHIEST SCHOOL IN AMERICA

West New York, New Jersey's Memorial High School Earns First-Ever Gold National Recognition Award from Alliance's Healthy Schools Program

(NEW YORK) June 15, 2010 – The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, recognized Memorial High School of West New York, N.J., for doing more to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity throughout the school day than any other school in the United States.

While the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program works with more than 9,000 schools across the country, Memorial High School is the first and only school to ever receive the Gold National Recognition Award. Today's announcement caps several years of effort by staff and students, who were honored with a Bronze National Recognition Award in 2008 and a Silver National Recognition Award in 2009.

Health and wellness are as much of an educational priority at Memorial High School as math, English and other core subjects, and the entire school community is reaping the benefits. Memorial's approach focuses on the entire school—from meals and physical education to staff wellness and health education. To achieve Gold recognition, Memorial used the resources of the Healthy Schools Program, which detail specific steps to create a healthier school environment.

“Changing the culture of a school doesn't happen overnight,” said John Fraraccio, West New York District Supervisor of Health and Physical Education. “If you come in one day and say everything is going to change, it's not going to work. After four years of using the tools and resources provided by the Healthy Schools Program, wellness is now an integral part of not only Memorial's culture, but the culture of the entire district.”

To earn Gold National Recognition, Memorial High School:

- Increased physical activity opportunities for staff and students through before- and after-school fitness clubs and a faculty boot camp that meets three times a week.
- Improved school meals, competitive foods and beverages available to students, all of which now meet the Alliance's rigorous criteria.
- Developed a student wellness ambassador program in which 60 students provide meaningful input into the development and implementation of school health and wellness activities.
- Required that all students pass annual health and physical education courses.
- Eliminated candy and soda from all fundraisers in favor of healthier options.

All schools in the West New York School District are now members of the Healthy Schools Program, and wellness has become a district-wide initiative. Because of this new focus, the Board of Education has even earmarked funds for school wellness committees and fitness programming.



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In addition to Memorial High School, the Healthy Schools Program also is recognizing 178 other U.S. schools for their efforts to create healthier environments for students and staff.

“Schools across the country are working hard to provide healthier environments for students while facing the challenges of decreased budgets and time,” said Ginny Ehrlich, executive director of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. “Memorial High School’s success confirms that despite these issues, it is possible to transform a school culture when staff, students and parents lead the charge in making healthy changes.”

The Healthy Schools Program is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which has committed \$28 million to the program. Any school in the country is eligible to earn the Alliance’s National Recognition Award at the bronze, silver, gold or platinum level as a result of implementing health-promoting programs and policies. The rigorous Healthy Schools Program criteria were developed in consultation with a panel of experts, including representatives from the American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others.

The first step toward recognition is to enroll in the Healthy Schools Program. 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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