

# Healthy Schools Campaign to Launch 'The Student Body Challenge' to Address Childhood Obesity in Schools

**Federally Mandated School Wellness Policies and Other Health Strategies To Be Discussed at Kick-Off Community Forums**

CHICAGO, IL (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – A recent survey of parents of school-aged children conducted by the national Action for Healthy Kids consortium found that while the majority of parents want their children to get healthier food and more exercise at school, nearly 85% were unaware that federal law requires their schools to develop comprehensive wellness policies addressing these issues by July 1, 2006. They are also unaware that the law specifies that parents, among other key stakeholders, must be involved from the beginning in designing those district policies.



**Send2Press® Newswire** To fill

this information gap and help schools meet the new federal mandate with policies that make a real difference, the Healthy Schools Campaign is initiating a public awareness effort entitled "The Student Body Challenge: Making Student Health and Fitness a School Policy." The first step is a series of Community Forums designed to inform local communities about school wellness policies and the role they can play in improving the school food environment, along with other school-based health strategies.

The free forums are open to the public and will take place in Quincy (October

18), Jacksonville (October 19), Crystal Lake (October 25), Marion (November 2) and Lombard (November 15). See attached fact sheet for locations and times. For more information or reservations, visit [www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org).

“There is an unprecedented, time-limited opportunity to make a real impact on school wellness,” said Rochelle Davis, founding Executive Director of the Healthy Schools Campaign. “Parents, health advocates and other concerned citizens are in a unique position to get involved in shaping their school environments in the areas of healthy eating, nutrition education and physical activity.”

Under the new Federal mandate, each school will be required to adopt a Wellness Policy that includes:

- (1) nutrition guidelines for all foods sold on school campus during the school day;*
- (2) setting school goals for nutrition education and physical activity;*
- (3) establishing community participation in creating local wellness policies; and*
- (4) creating a plan for measuring implementation of these wellness policies.*

The Healthy Schools Campaign is publishing and distributing a step-by-step guide, including a model school wellness policy on CD-rom that can be adapted by school districts to fit their local needs. The booklet and other educational resources will be available later this year and interested parties can reserve a copy by visiting [www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org).

These initiatives are a response to the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and related illnesses among children and teens, which is linked with the consumption of nutrient-poor fast food and decreased physical activity. The sharp rise in the number of children diagnosed with type II diabetes and other obesity-related health problems may even result to shortened life expectancy for the current generation of school children. Even former president Bill Clinton, who struggled with his weight as a child and adult, has been tapped to advocate on this issue by the American Heart Association.

“Schools can positively impact student health. By improving nutrition and physical education and by creating health-based standards for the foods sold in schools, we can improve both student health and the learning environment,” said Rochelle Davis, said Founding Executive Director of Healthy Schools

Campaign, a nonprofit organization that advocates for policies and model programs that make schools healthy places to learn and work. "To continue to serve unhealthy foods and not teach basics of nutrition would be to act without regard for the next generation."

The Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) is Illinois' leading authority on healthy school environments and an increasingly powerful political voice for people who want healthier children, better education and a cleaner environment. HSC works with a broad network of individuals and organizations that includes parents, teachers, school administrators, students, public health advocates, education advocates and community leaders on issues such as indoor air quality management and sustainable school design, green cleaning, diesel school bus emissions, hazardous waste, and the growing problem of childhood obesity.

For more information, call (312) 419-1810 or visit [www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org).

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