

Danville, Illinois boasts first Elementary School in U.S. to Earn National Award For Combatting Childhood Obesity

The [Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#), founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, honored Northeast Elementary Magnet School of Danville, Ill. in December 2010 with a Gold National Recognition Award for creating a healthy school environment for students and staff. The school received the accolade from the Alliance's [Healthy Schools Program](#), which works with more than 9,000 schools across the United States to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by promoting healthy eating and daily physical activity at school.

"Today, obesity has become commonplace in America, and as many as one in three young people are already affected by this dangerous epidemic," said President Clinton, founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation. "In our efforts to put an end to childhood obesity, the Alliance is working with exemplary schools like Northeast Elementary Magnet, whose students, staff, and parents are coming together to make healthy eating and physical activity not just a priority in the classroom, but a way of life in their community."

"After participating in the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program for four years, eating healthy foods and engaging in physical activity are no longer new for our students," said Cheryl McIntire, Principal of Northeast Elementary Magnet School. "It's just who we are and what we do effortlessly."

Northeast Elementary was the first elementary school in the country to receive the Gold National Recognition Award from the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program and only the second school to earn Gold recognition in the history of the program. The Healthy Schools Program launched in 2006 with a few hundred participating schools and now provides free assistance to more than 9,000 schools nationwide.

To earn a Gold National Recognition Award, Northeast Elementary Magnet School:

- Increased [physical education \(PE\)](#) from 100 to 150 minutes for all grades each week.
- Started an evening activity program, called Falcons in Training (F.I.T.), through which students and families have the opportunity to walk, jog and run on the school's outdoor track.
- Provided a climbing wall for students to use during PE classes by securing a grant from the Danville Public School Foundation and additional funding from the Parent-Teacher Association.
- Improved school meals to meet the Alliance's rigorous criteria, which exceeds current USDA standards for reimbursable school meals.
- Earned a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education to serve fresh fruits and vegetables to students every day.

"Every school in the nation should strive to be a healthy school" said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“Healthy students are better able to concentrate on their work, attend school on a regular basis, and perform better in class.”

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 by 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.

“We want to congratulate Northeast Elementary Magnet School for their commitment and participation in this program. Their staff and students have worked tirelessly to build a healthier school community,” said Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., president of the American Heart Association.

“Programs like this will help us achieve our new 2020 goal to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans and reduce deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. We need to start early and emphasize the importance of physical activity and nutrition to our children so we can reverse the childhood obesity epidemic and encourage life-long healthy behaviors,” said Sacco.

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 <http://www.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 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 <http://www.rwjf.org>.