

# YOUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH IN ERIE

## Highmark Healthy High 5:

### HELPING KIDS ACHIEVE LIFELONG GOOD HEALTH – IN FIVE KEY AREAS

Highmark Healthy High 5 helps kids, ages 6–18, to develop lifelong healthy behaviors in five key areas: nutrition, physical activity, grieving support, self-esteem and bullying prevention. The initiative aims to create a culture of good health through what academics call children's health promotion.

"We've long known – and research supports – that the healthy habits that children develop when young will con-

tinue with them into adulthood," explains Yvonne Cook, president of the Highmark Foundation.

That's why, in 2006, the Highmark Foundation created Highmark Healthy High 5 through a \$100 million donation from Highmark Inc. Key health indicators showed that children in Pennsylvania were struggling with understanding good nutrition, finding the opportunity for physical exercise and coping with complex emotions. Today, the healthy impact of the initiative is resonating throughout the Commonwealth, in our own backyards.

"More than 1 million kids across Pennsylvania have benefited from Highmark Healthy High 5 since its introduction," says Cook. "The initiative is provid-

#### Highmark Healthy High 5 emphasizes good health for kids through:

- NUTRITION
- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- GRIEVING SUPPORT
- SELF-ESTEEM
- BULLYING PREVENTION

ing our children with tools, knowledge and skills to enhance their physical and emotional well-being. We're reaching kids in the classroom, on the playground, in the gym, through Web-based activities and in after-school programs."

Highmark Healthy High 5 relies on proven, evidence-based partnership programs – for example, with the SPARK Active Recreation program

and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Partners are chosen specifically for their demonstrated outcomes for engaging children, parents, school personnel and the community in the pursuit of healthier behaviors – and healthier environments.

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*At the Boys & Girls Club of Erie, everyone succeeds in the SPARK Active Recreation program. SPARK is being utilized at more than 140 sites across Pennsylvania.*

## At the Boys & Girls Club, SPARK Is a Hit

"Part of our success," says Joe Grucza, director of core services at the Dr. George J. D'Angelo Clubhouse, Boys & Girls Club of Erie, "is to get kids involved. Kids who normally don't participate in gym activities do participate here because SPARK does not involve high skill levels. For example, we have a couple of kids – 8 and 9 years old – who weren't the typical kids who'd go to the gym. We had to coax them. 'Come on,' we said, 'try this. It's new.' With SPARK, they became regulars."

SPARK Active Recreation, a Highmark Healthy High 5 program, helps kids of

all skill levels discover what's inherent in all of them, their built-in energy and their innate enjoyment of fun and fitness. A nationally recognized physical activity program, SPARK is designed for children ages 5–14, promoting moderate to vigorous activities for up to one hour daily and establishing lifelong healthy behaviors.

At the Boys & Girls Club of Erie, adult leaders follow the SPARK curriculum, focusing on fitness. "In general, we see kids getting away from fitness activities," Grucza says. So, three times a week, he has his 30-some 7 to 13-year-olds spend an hour or so running around the parachute, playing crazy cones and generally enjoying

other games built around fitness.

"It's a big success to get kids to come on a regular basis," he says. "Not to warehouse them, but to get them engaged and really help them to develop their confidence. SPARK is something that these kids can access.

"SPARK has even been able to open other inroads for us," Grucza adds. The club, for example, has a vending machine full of the usual high-calorie snacks. But the kids don't use it much anymore. "Because of SPARK," he says, "and a good hot meal available in the evening, they don't access it much. They've made a lifestyle change." ■

# COMBATING CHILDHOOD OBESITY with eTools Technology

Beginning in 2002, Highmark's health records indicated a distinct jump in the incidence of type 2 diabetes among its insured children. Prior to that, type 2 diabetes was practically unheard of among children. The culprit: obesity.

Then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported the same trend nationally. CDC data showed that since the mid-1970s, kids and adults have had a sharply higher incidence of being overweight or obese, leading to higher rates of hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.

Finally came state and federal mandates requiring schools to capture student Body Mass Index (BMI) and create wellness policies to address physical activity and nutrition in schools. But how, without resources?

Highmark Healthy High 5 responded by arming educators, school nurses, administrators and food service professionals with a sophisticated tool that facilitates policy, practice and curriculum changes to address nutritional and physical fitness deficiencies in their own school environments. The tool: Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools, offered free to schools in the Highmark Foundation's service area through 2013.

"It's a secure, Web-based portal that enables schools to both comply with federal and state mandates for improving student wellness and develop a proactive, coordinated approach to

obesity reduction, based on best practices," explains Martha L. Harris, co-founder of InnerLink, with whom the Highmark Foundation has contracted to develop the program.

**Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools can have a positive impact on the menus in the cafeteria, the fitness activities in gym class, nutrition lessons in health class and more.**

"It encompasses better health data collection, including BMI screenings, better health record keeping and more strategic use of aggregated student health data to formulate strategies for particular school populations," says Harris.

As a high-tech tool, Health eTools allows health data to be recorded and reported to the state and to parents more efficiently, allowing school health professionals much more time to spend with students. As a way of aggregating data as a catalyst for change, it has the capability to support changes in the menus in the cafeteria, the fitness activities in gym class, the way nutrition is taught in health class, acquisition of new equipment and programs, and a whole range of other potential ways for reducing obesity.

Thus far, some 400,000 students in more than 800 Pennsylvania school buildings have benefitted from the program. And 44 percent of the schools are using Health eTools to measure BMI.

"Ultimately, the goal is to create healthier students, who, research shows, make better learners," summarizes Harris. ■

To see if Health eTools is in your schools, visit [www.healthtoolsforschools.org](http://www.healthtoolsforschools.org).

## In Erie Schools, Kids Are Working Hard to Be Healthy

It may not happen very often, but it happens. One Erie seventh grader, a bit on the heavy side, turned out to have high blood pressure – high enough to be red flagged in a routine school screening.

That's when nurse Debra Feeney – nurse Debbie to everyone – using the Highmark Healthy High 5's Health eTools for Schools, a secure, Web-based portal that enables schools to comply with federal and state mandates for improving student wellness, was able to document her concerns and alert the boy's parents.

"We've now been keeping track of his blood pressure and health habits," Feeney says. "He's choosing more fruits and vegetables rather than fatty foods. And he's more active."

In Erie, many schools using Health eTools for Schools to monitor students' Body Mass Index (BMI) have increased their programming about food – and student activities. For example, at JoAnna Connell Elementary School, they've got the Connell Morning Movers. Five days a week, from 7:45 a.m. – 8 a.m., kids walk around the building, run relay races, jump rope and shoot hoops. "It gives them an outlet before they do the more sedentary things," Feeney says.

Other schools in the district have added Dance Dance Revolution and Boot



*In the Erie area, nurses at over 40 schools are using Health eTools to record student health data more efficiently, freeing up time to address student health concerns.*

Camp to increase fitness. What's more, they're charting how much the activities – and healthy eating – help each child. "With Health eTools," Feeney says, "we're able to keep accurate records of the kids' health stats."

For the kids, it's plenty of fun. "And, they like being part of a group that's working toward better health," she says. ■



*Through Highmark Healthy High 5's Health eTools for Schools, children's collective health data, including Body Mass Index (BMI), is a catalyst for health-related changes at school.*



# Taking the Fear Out of Growing Up

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a schoolchild is bullied every seven minutes. And every day, more than 160,000 students miss school because of the fear of being bullied. Bullying comes in many forms: exclusion

*“Safe school environments are critical to the academic success of students.”*

*Matthew Masiello, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Windber Research Institute  
Architect of Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!  
A Bullying Prevention Program*

from groups, threatening messages, repeated teasing and taunting and physical violence.

Children who are bullied have lower self-esteem, higher rates of depression

and more incidence of suicidal thinking. Furthermore, bullying impacts school performance and attendance. It leads to physical health problems. And it's been clearly tied to episodes of school violence.

For that reason, Highmark Healthy High 5 is supporting the very best bullying prevention programs developed in the world.

Through both Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!® and PA CARES, the Highmark Foundation has awarded more than \$5.1 million to fund programs through 2010 in 400 schools across Pennsylvania. Both programs help schools to implement the internationally renowned, evidence-based Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. For more than 25 years, the Olweus program has produced excellent results, decreasing bullying behaviors among children in grades K–10 between 20 and 70 percent. It includes interventions at the

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*In middle schools, students learn about bullying behaviors and preventions through teacher-led role-playing sessions that result in healthier school environments.*

## Cambridge Springs Elementary Stands Up Against Bullying

You'd have to see it – 600 Cambridge Springs Elementary students all wearing lime green iSTAND (against bullying) T-shirts, dedicating themselves to bullying prevention. “Our program began with a common definition of bullying,” says Principal Patti Fiely. “We have rules – we will not bully others. We will include others. When somebody is being bullied, we will tell adults in the school and at home.”

### Your Child May Be Bullied If He/She:

- Comes home with torn or damaged clothing
- Has unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- Is afraid of going to school
- Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed
- Has low self-esteem

With school bullying an epidemic – nationwide, a child is bullied every seven minutes, and some 160,000 children miss school daily because they fear bullying – the Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT! program brought the internationally renowned Olweus bullying prevention practices into schools such as Cambridge Springs.

The program includes bully logs, on-the-spot interventions and sessions with guidance counselors. “We spend a lot of time talking through scenarios,” Fiely says. “We have seen a significant reduction in the number of bully logs. Last April, we had 25. In November, we had two.”



*According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a school child is bullied every seven minutes.*

Adds Bully Prevention Coordinator Pamela Dailey, “The Olweus program helps children enjoy school – and learn better. We’ve tracked the results academically. In 2008, after the program was initiated, we saw a 7 percent increase in reading and a 5.5 percent increase in math in standardized testing.”

“Kids now stand up for other students,” adds HALT! trainer Michele Curtze. “To have kids learn bullying prevention, and demonstrate it, that’s as good as it gets for the students and the adults who work with them.” ■

### TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Never tell your child to “ignore” bullying.
- Don’t blame your child or assume your child provoked the bullying.
- Encourage your child to talk about the bullying with you.
- Tell your child that bullying is wrong and that you’re glad he or she had the courage to discuss it.
- Don’t encourage physical retaliation against the bully such as “hit him back.”
- Take quick action. Contact a teacher, school counselor or principal immediately about the bullying.
- Work closely with school personnel to resolve the problem. Describe how and where your child is being bullied so that a school principal or teacher can witness the bullying.
- Remember that all children have the right to feel safe.
- Help your children to develop healthy friendships with students at school. A child who has friends is less likely to be bullied.
- Ensure that your child feels safe and well-loved at home.

# Funding Schools' Wish Lists

*"Thank you for such a positive addition to our school."*

*"With your help, I truly believe that we have inspired our students and their families to make healthy living a habit."*

These are the kinds of responses that the Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program inspires.



The School Challenge grant program provides funding that enables schools and physical education teachers to change the face of physical education in their schools by developing innovative programs that teach lifelong wellness. Most of the grants are written by teachers with a vision and passion for what would make a difference in their school.

Schools are invited ("challenged") to submit proposals for programs that will measurably improve the overall health status of students. All schools within the Highmark Foundation's 49-county Pennsylvania service area are eligible to apply for grants up to \$10,000 per building each year.

Since 2007, Highmark Healthy High 5 has awarded \$3.5 million in school challenge grants to 496 schools in 47 Pennsylvania counties.

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# \$3.5 MILLION FOR 496 P

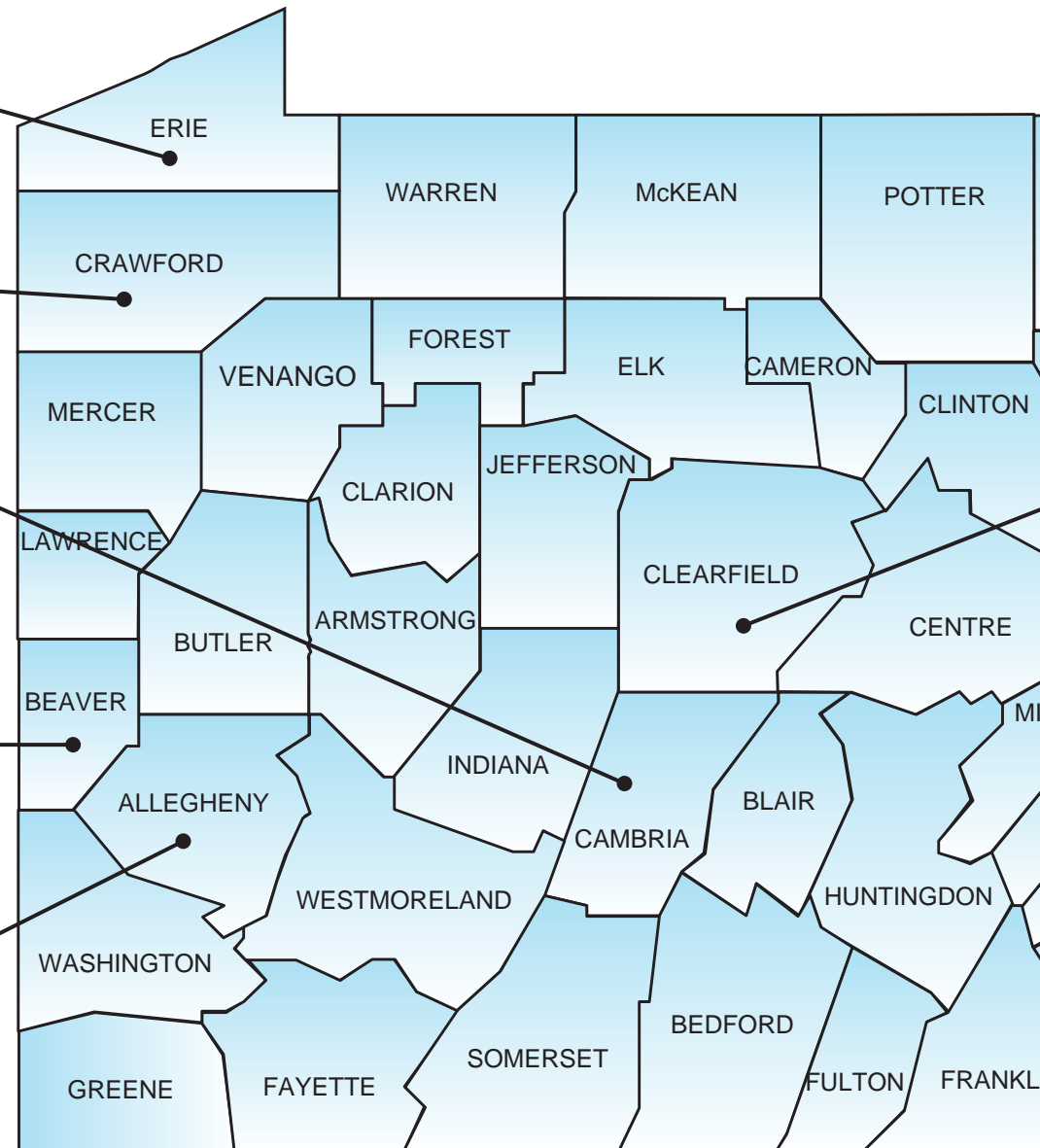
**School District of the City of Erie - Woodrow Wilson Middle School**  
A bullying prevention program  
**\$10,000**

**Diocese of Erie - Seton Catholic School**  
The Dance Around the World for Fitness and Fun program  
**\$4,950**

**Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown - Bishop McCort Catholic High School**  
Cardiovascular equipment for the physical education program  
**\$10,000**

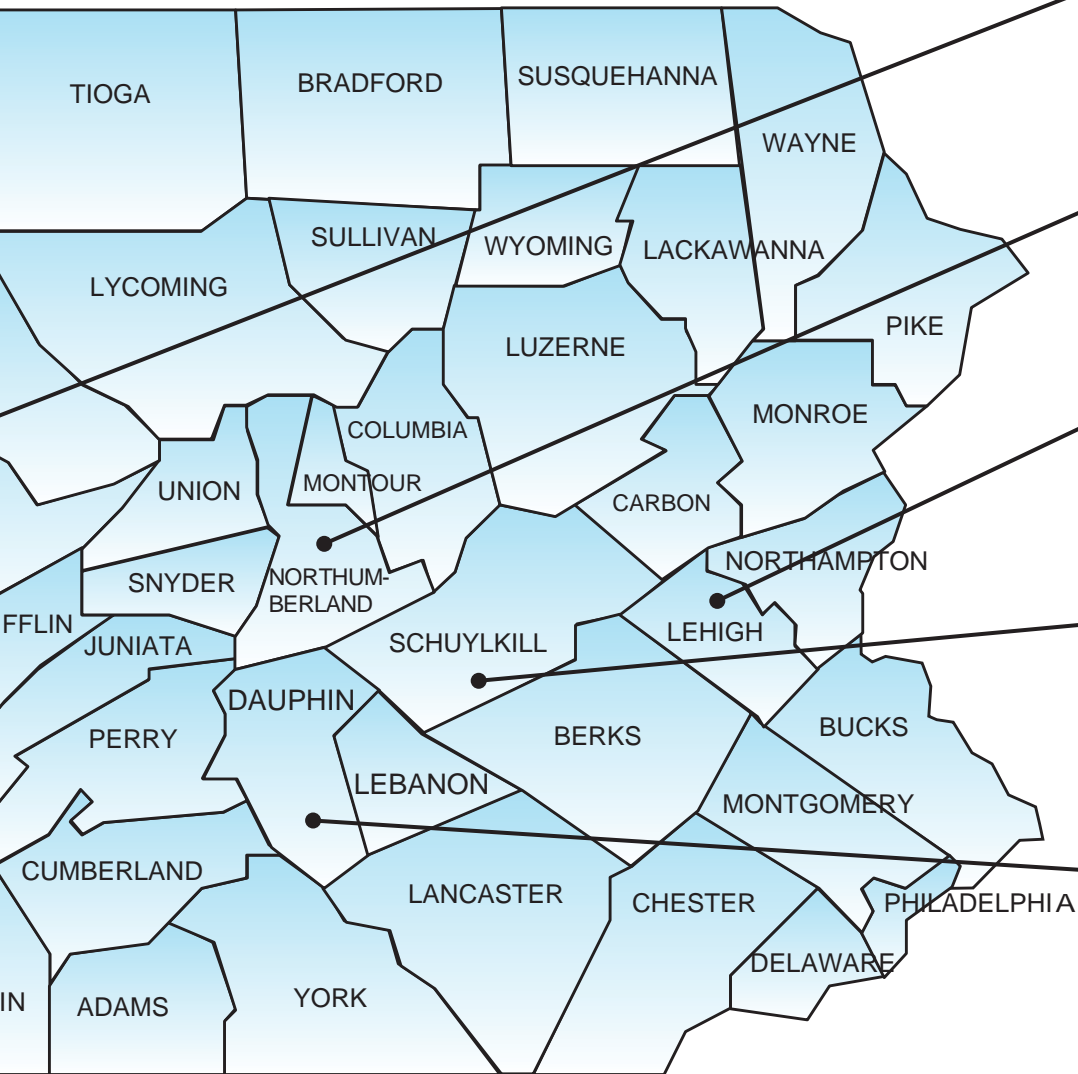
**New Brighton Area School District - New Brighton Area Elementary School**  
Nutrition program materials and Dance Dance Revolution physical education equipment  
**\$4,345**

**Pittsburgh Public School District - Pittsburgh Colfax K-8**  
A handicap-accessible playground  
**\$10,000**



*"The Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program puts grant money right in the hands of schools, creating a direct, positive and powerful impact on the lifelong good health of our kids,"* says Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett.

# PA SCHOOLS SINCE 2007



**Purchase Line School District –  
Purchase Line North Elementary**  
*A bullying prevention program*  
**\$3,030**

**Milton Area School District –  
James F. Baugher Elementary School**  
*An after-school fitness program*  
**\$3,950**

**Salisbury Township School District –  
Harry S. Truman Elementary School**  
*A nutrition awareness program*  
**\$4,015**

**Minersville Area School District –  
Minersville Jr./Sr. High School**  
*Equipment to enhance the cardio-  
fitness program*  
**\$9,967**

**Lower Dauphin School District –  
Nye Elementary School**  
*The G.Y.M.  
(Get Youth Moving) program*  
**\$9,757**

## St. Mary's Kids Learn to Eat Smart

The challenge at St. Mary's Middle School was to get 570 kids eating smarter and better. The question was how to accomplish it.

Using a Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant, nurse Melissa Cadori initiated the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables program, offering veggies with low-fat dip and fruit with fat-free dip in place of snack cakes sold as a la carte options. "The biggest thing for me," she recalls, "was to dispel the myth that kids want junk food. After we did a survey and set up posters around the school focusing on healthy choices and the fat/calorie/nutritional content of foods, the students were excited that they were going to get new things in the cafeteria."

The results were more than impressive. At the end of the school year, St. Mary's Middle School was selling an average of 90 salads at lunch, while snack sales were down more than 50 percent.

Such positive results have helped more than their waistlines. "For these kids," nurse Cadori says, "making good choices, and feeling they have the power to make a difference, has had a positive effect on their self-esteem. We also found that providing accurate, clear information, then allowing them to make choices, resulted in the students making good, healthy choices.

"We often don't give kids enough credit," she adds. "Given the opportunity, they'll make the right choices. That's inspiring to me and healthy for them." ■

school building – primarily for physical education and wellness programs – where it can have  
ia's Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

# Families Find Healing at the Highmark Caring Place in Erie



Annemarie Harrington and children, Andrew, 13, and Abbie, 10, turned to the Highmark Caring Place for healing after losing their husband and father, Tim, in 2005.

Tim Harrington of Erie – husband, father, golfer and fisherman – was only 39 when he died in September of 2005 from a rare form of adrenal cancer. It had been just 10 months since his diagnosis, and although the family knew the prognosis, “we were in denial,” Annemarie Harrington recalls. “We thought he was somehow going to pull through.”

A case manager herself, Annemarie had seen families in grief and had made referrals to the Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, in Erie. “So, when we suffered the loss,” she says, “it was something I knew we needed to do.”

Since 1997, the Highmark Caring Place has served more than 30,000 family members and community partners at its facilities in Erie, Pittsburgh and Lemoyne. A fourth location, in Warrendale, Pa., is opening this spring.

“One out of every 20 children will have a parent die before he or she is out of high school,” reports Kathy Frisina, education and outreach coordinator for the Highmark Caring Place. “When you’re one of those kids, you feel that no one understands. You need support.”

Although the Harrington kids – Andrew, 13, and Abbie, 10 – were able to talk about their father’s death, their mother says “they needed to be somewhere where they knew they weren’t going through his alone.”

Coming to the Highmark Caring Place that October, a month after Tim’s death, “I figured they’d just talk us through it,” Andrew says. “I wasn’t expecting the food and games and fun.”

“When I saw all the kids who were going through the same thing,” Abbie adds, “I felt better. I felt that I could fit in. I made friends.”

After completing all 10 sessions of

peer-group support in 2005, the Harringtons went back in 2006. “I had a great time,” Andrew says. “The activities room gave me and my friend time to unwind and talk.”

“We found it was okay to have fun as a family again,” Annemarie says. “The Highmark Caring Place helped us know that the future was going to be okay.” ■

## How to help a grieving child

- Let him know that he is not alone in his grief.
- Encourage her to share her feelings, memories and experiences.
- Make him aware that what he is going through is natural and normal.
- Let her know that hope and healing are possible.
- Provide him with the support of family and peers.
- Realize that she may feel more fearful one year after the death than right away.
- Understand that he may feel a lower sense of self-worth two years after the death.
- Understand that the only way through grief is to grieve. Allow the time, the space and the places to grieve.
- Visit [www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org](http://www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org) for more information about grieving support for children.

## THE FREE, INTERACTIVE, ONLINE WAY to be healthy!

Being healthy is lots of fun. And learning to be healthy can also be tons of fun! Especially when it’s free, it’s interactive and it involves lots of games and activities – including award-winning online innovation and design.

That’s the approach taken by the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center in York, Pa., Highmark Healthy High 5’s partner in creating [www.LearntobeHealthy.org](http://www.LearntobeHealthy.org), a leading online resource for health education. The resource provides teachers with free, standards-based lesson plans and students with free educational

games and activities – all focused around making healthy choices.

A national award-winning program, [LearntobeHealthy.org](http://LearntobeHealthy.org) has been utilized by more than 2,800 educators and 235,000 students in 444 school districts across the Highmark Foundation service area. A study has shown that students performed significantly better on a knowledge test of nutrition after completing the site’s nutrition curriculum as part of their health class.

“The goal of the site is to teach and inspire students and families to make healthy choices. We hope to complete the circle of learning so that students are encouraged to be healthy at school, home and in the community setting,” says Marcia Meehan, president and chief executive officer of the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center.

“Staying healthy isn’t about starting a new diet or fitness regime... it should really be a way of life,” Meehan explains. “And [LearntobeHealthy.org](http://LearntobeHealthy.org) is committed to continually expanding and refreshing its engaging activities, promising to bring its visitors back again and again for new information and activities related to lifelong health.” ■

Visit the site today!  
[www.LearntobeHealthy.org](http://www.LearntobeHealthy.org)



# “T.R.U.E. Cards...Life Lessons” Available Free



by the Heartwood Institute, leaders in creating educational materials for children that help them to develop a basic moral framework.

The 49 T.R.U.E. Cards introduce students to seven core attributes: courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love. Typically, teachers introduce the cards to students and have them write what the quotes mean to them for discussion with their classmates.

Best of all, the packages of “T.R.U.E. Cards...Life Lessons” were provided free of charge to more than 2,000 schools in the Highmark Foundation’s 49-county service area. More than a quarter of the schools have requested additional sets of cards, and surveys of educators show that 80 percent find the cards to be valuable and would recommend them to others. They’re still available free of charge, by request, to every public,

charter and private school located in the Highmark Foundation’s service area.

“The full package includes the 49 beautifully illustrated cards, detailed instructions, an attribute poster and a training DVD for using the package in educational or home settings,” explains Chris Sandvig, executive director of The Heartwood Institute, the partner in the program. “The T.R.U.E. Cards program is intended to inspire learning and conversation around the seven core attributes, and it’s aligned with Pennsylvania’s academic standards in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening.” ■

For information or to request T.R.U.E. Cards, visit [www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org](http://www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org).

“A hero is someone who knows how to hang on one minute longer.”

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

Each of these quotations is an example of an inspirational message for children that appears on one of 49 different 5" x 8" T.R.U.E. Cards, accompanied by child-friendly four-color illustrations of children employing the wisdom of the quotation.

Highmark Healthy High 5 “T.R.U.E. Cards...Life Lessons” is a character-building and self-esteem tool specially developed for 8 to 13-year-old children

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## Examples of How It Works

- In their schools, students learn about the adverse health, social and educational effects of **bullying** through the Olweus Program, which applies 25 years of experience in bullying prevention to achieve 20–70 percent reductions in student reports of being bullied or bullying others.
- At the Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families, **grieving children and their caregivers** find healing through a program based on peer-group support.

With four locations throughout the state, the Caring Place has reached more than 30,000 children, families and community partners. The Highmark Foundation is extending the reach of the Caring Place by partnering with additional facilities across the state that are replicating the program to reach even more families.

*“More than 1 million kids across Pennsylvania have benefited from Highmark Healthy High 5 since its introduction in 2006.”*

*Yvonne Cook, President, Highmark Foundation*

- Through school challenge grants, Pennsylvania schools are challenged to implement innovative new **fitness and wellness programs** with outcome-based goals. Schools have

acquired spinning bikes, climbing walls, Dance Dance Revolution, yoga mats, mountain bikes and even snowshoes.

“Through Highmark Healthy High 5, we’re directly addressing kids’ prevailing health problems such as obesity and bullying, working to help reverse negative health trends,”

concludes Cook. “And we’re helping kids learn about positive healthy behaviors that will enable them to enjoy longer, healthier lives than generations before.” ■

## Accomplished Through Strong Partnerships

Highmark Healthy High 5 is delivered to our kids predominantly through strong partnership programs. Our partners are experts in delivering proven, evidence-based programs that include training, educational materials and a variety of creative, hands-on learning experiences. Partners and programs include:

- **SPARK Active Recreation**, in support of noncompetitive after-school and physical recreation programs
- **Highmark Caring Place, A Center for Grieving Children, Adolescents and Their Families**, in support of grieving families
- **InnerLink, Inc.**, contracted to create **Highmark Healthy High 5 Health eTools for Schools**, in support of school wellness policies and programs
- **Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center**, creator of **LearntobeHealthy.org**, in support of lifelong healthy choices
- **Windber Research Institute** in support of **Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT!® – A Bullying Prevention Program**
- **The Heartwood Institute**, creator of **Highmark Healthy High 5 “T.R.U.E. Cards... Life Lessons,”** in support of moral character development and self-esteem
- **PA CARES**, made available through the Center for Safe Schools, in support of training educators in bullying prevention
- **Penn State Hershey Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion**, creator of **nrg Powered by Choice**, in support of student-initiated nutrition and fitness programs
- **Highmark Healthy High 5 Bullying Prevention Institute** in support of training educators in bullying prevention
- **KidShape®**, a weight-management program for children

# Empowering Teens to Employ Their Own Ideas Promoting Good Health



*Ultimate Frisbee fundraisers are one way teens work through nrg to fund their own healthy programs in their schools and communities.*

The nrg Powered by Choice campaign, funded by Highmark Healthy High 5, empowers teens, ages 13–18, to promote nutrition and physical activity to their peers and younger children. Teens can also hold a fundraising event to purchase equipment that will make a healthy change in their school or community recreation center. The program was developed by Highmark Healthy High 5 partner, the Penn State Hershey Center for Nutrition and Activity Promotion.

More than 200 schools serving 100,000-plus students have received kits from the center and Highmark Healthy High 5 to promote healthy living and implement a healthy change in their school or community. In one year's time, the schools participat-

ing in nrg are seeing a 2 to 3 percent reduction in population of overweight and obese students – very encouraging preliminary results.

## Teens! Develop your very own healthy program through nrg.

Through nrg Powered by Choice, one Pennsylvania school raised \$1,400 for equipment for its physical education program. The students there hosted an nrg Ultimate Frisbee® Tournament fundraiser.

More than 240 students participated.

Some other ideas? A student council could rally the student body to fund-raise for a climbing wall for physical education classes.

Or a student activity group could hold an event to fund-raise for a healthy vending machine to be installed at school.

“The possibilities are endless,” says Allison Topper, executive director of the center. “And nrg Powered by Choice provides teens with the framework needed to lead the movements to create a healthier tomorrow for today's youth.” ■

Visit [www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org](http://www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org) for more information on nrg Powered by Choice.

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individual, classroom, schoolwide and community levels in support of bullying prevention.

HALT! includes a program for teens and onsite technical assistance. PA CARES is run by the Center for Safe Schools, which is the Pennsylvania Department of Education's agency that is responsible for school safety.

In addition, through the Highmark Healthy High 5 Bullying Prevention Institute, the Highmark Foundation provides professional development training to increase the skill level of those adults involved in bullying prevention, emphasizing best practice solutions and awarding participants with continuing education credits. Currently, more than 1,200 school personnel have attended the Institute's sessions.

The initiative is timely because Pennsylvania schools were required by Jan. 1, 2009, to adopt bullying prevention policies. “The Highmark Healthy High 5 initiative is leading the way in providing schools in our state with the funding, support and training to comply with an amendment to the school code that requires all Pennsylvania public school districts to adopt a bullying prevention policy in 2009,” says Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

After all, bullying prevention is crucial to good overall physical health, and especially to success in school. “Safe school environments are critical to the academic success of students,” says Matthew Masiello, M.D., architect of the Highmark Healthy High 5 HALT! program. “If students are worried about their safety in school, their focus gets diverted, making it exceedingly difficult to succeed academically.” ■

Visit [www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org](http://www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org).

*Funding Schools' Wish Lists continued from page 4*

“The Highmark Healthy High 5 School Challenge grant program puts grant money right in the school building – primarily for physical education and wellness programs – where it can have a direct, positive and powerful impact on the lifelong good health of our kids,” offers Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak.

For example, in 2008, many schools used their grants to purchase the Dance Dance Revolution program. Others have purchased climbing walls, snowshoes or mountain bikes. Some have purchased exercise bikes, steppers, treadmills or elliptical machines.

One school developed an after-school Hip Hop dance program while another constructed a quarter-mile oval walking track. One school implemented a nutrition program that included the planting of a vegetable garden. And another taught nutrition through a “Kids in the Kitchen” cooking program.

“The schools are creative and very forward thinking about how to continue to advance healthy behaviors among their students, and we're now able to develop guidelines on best practices from the program,” adds Kweilin Nassar, Highmark Healthy High 5's project director. “If it's new, different or trendy, all the better to engage the kids. And healthy kids are academically successful kids.” ■

Suggest that your school applies for a school challenge grant. Visit [www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org](http://www.highmarkhealthyhigh5.org).

*HALT, Healthy High 5, Health eTools for Schools and the hand in the hand symbol are registered marks of the Highmark Foundation.*

*Highmark is a registered mark of Highmark Inc. KidShape is a registered program of the KidShape Foundation.*

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