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Success Stories

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THE COUNTRY

Healthy Celebrations, Rewards and Fundraising

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'Hello, Pj!' Highlights Healthy Initiatives

PAGE JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHARLES TOWN, WEST VIRGINIA
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Page Jackson Elementary School in Charles Town, a member of the Healthy Schools Program in partnership with Alliance for a Healthier Generation, has announced the release of children's book, "Hello, Pj!" - an adorable children's book starring the school's lovable mascot, Pj the Panda.

The hardcover book captures in personalized words and colorful illustrations the culture of Page Jackson Elementary and the school's focus on being healthy. "Hello, Pj!" features the playful school mascot enjoying a full day of activities with his friends. He recites the Pledge of Allegiance, visits the computer lab, gets his paws messy during an art class, reads his favorite book in the library, sings the Page Jackson Pride Song and races along the school's walking trail.

At the end of his busy day at this Healthy School, the lively mascot also reflects on annual events and activities including the Christmas musical, the Panda Praise Awards, Character Counts Awards and other exciting activities that make Page Jackson Elementary School a unique school for students, teachers, administrators and parent volunteers.

Tara Aycock, principal at Page Jackson Elementary, worked closely alongside nationally recognized children's publisher Mascot Books located in Herndon, Va., to create the customized book. Page Jackson's one-of-a-kind, hardcover book promotes reading, reinforces Healthy School initiatives, builds school spirit and serves as a fundraiser for the school.

"It's rewarding to partner with elementary school principals and parent volunteers and to help them promote reading, build school spirit and raise money for their school," said Shani Seidel, elementary school fundraising manager at Mascot Books. "It's exciting to help schools raise money by promoting reading and offering a non-food fundraiser to their school community."



Fundraisers Encourage Reading and Running, Not Junk Food

WESTWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS

Although many principals are willing to go out on a limb for their students, how many will go up to the roof? In a recent fundraising effort, Principal Jared Skorburg promised students that for every \$2000 dollars raised in a PTO-sponsored reading challenge, he would spend one hour on the building's roof reading aloud to students. Students raised more than \$7000 and Principal Skorburg spent an entire October morning reading to students from his lofty perch.

Tired of traditional sales-based fundraisers, the Westwood PTO decided to run their own. By creating their own plan, the group was able to increase profits because there were no administrative costs to share with a fundraising company. The "5/10/15 Reading Challenge" encouraged students to find five (5) people to pledge ten (10) dollars for the student to read fifteen (15) minutes per day for a week. A total of 158 students participated. As an incentive for participating, students were able to earn gift certificates to the school store and local businesses and school spirit gear. At the end of the week the PTO was proud to announce a grand total of \$7608 in pure profit.

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Blender Bike & Spin Art Cycling: Spinning Toward a New Type of Celebration

MONTE VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Like many schools, Monte Vista Elementary School depends on fundraisers throughout the year to maintain special programs and student activities. Cake Walks, cookie dough sales and a BBQ with typical, unhealthy fare were some of the school's most popular fundraisers. Over the past few years, the school's wellness council decided that one of their main goals was to replace the unhealthy fundraising activities with more active and healthier alternatives. When a parent brought forward the idea of the "Blender Bike," the council was thrilled.

With funds from a national Safe Routes to School grant, they purchased the bike blender attachment from a company called Rock the Bike. A local nonprofit donated the bike and they were ready to ride!

The wellness council researched and purchased the blender attachment, keeps the schedule and makes sure it is available to teachers and for fundraisers. The bike has provided an opportunity to teach kids how to make healthy snacks that meet the Alliance Guide-



lines, to keep students physically active by using the bike in classes (as a reward and a learning tool) and to have a healthy fundraiser by selling small amounts of the smoothies or chances to ride the bike at school events.

Physical Education teacher Paula Jackson said that the bike has been a great addition to the school. "Students are associating riding a bike with healthy fun, they have learned how to make a healthy snack and the school has a mobile fundraiser!" She goes on to say that the bike also offers an alternative to parents who want to bring something healthier in for birthday celebrations. They can bring the fruit, juice and yogurt

to the classroom and the students ride the bike to make the smoothies. Students will then share a "birthday toast" with the fruit smoothie. They have even used it at a staff luncheon.

In addition to the Bike Blender attachment, the SRTS grant was used to purchase a Spin Art attachment for the bicycle from the same company. With the Spin Art attachment, one student rides, another squirts the paint, and a piece of art has been created with human energy and teamwork. And by charging for the privilege of painting and riding, the wellness council now has a double fundraiser activity! At a recent school wide event, the Blender & Spin Art Bike was a huge hit with children and adults.

The Blender & Spin Art Bike complements the school's vast array of now healthier fundraisers, such as the PTA Fall BBQ and Health Fair where soda and unhealthy food items have been swapped with water, fresh vegetables, whole grain breads, veggie burger options and physical activity opportunities like a mobile climbing wall. With cooperation from the school's PTA, roller skating and swimming parties have replaced the cookie dough sales. The popular Art-n-Dessert Night now boasts more fresh fruit than brownies, and the most popular and always successful Jog-a-Thon continues to bring in around \$20,000 per year.

Coffee Beans Bring in Bucks

MARION HIGH SCHOOL | MARION, SOUTH CAROLINA

Hoping to find a unique school fundraiser for the student council that would appeal to students, staff and families, student council advisor Rita Lewis scoured the internet to look for ideas. Since joining the Healthy Schools Program, working on their school fundraisers has been high on their list of priorities.

She found a company that offered gourmet coffee, tea and gift sets. "The fundraiser was held in the fall when there was a nip in the air- the perfect time for a hot cup of coffee!" Lewis was pleased with the money that they raised and hopes to do it again next year.

Schools Turning to Alternative Fundraisers

PS 54 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

For Guy Garrison, physical education teacher at PS 54, what was so appealing about the Mighty Milers program was that it offered the school a way to raise money to fund their extracurricular programs while getting his students to move more. Students are encouraged to ask family, friends, neighbors and local businesses to sponsor them as they walk a 26.2-mile marathon, which they do over the course of a month.

The program is sponsored by the NYC Road Runner's Club. Mighty Milers rewards the students with gift cards, t-shirts, pencils, membership cards and medals. Garrison said that in addition to raising \$1543 in four weeks, the students were proud that they walked so many miles and that they were helping to support the school's basketball and track programs.

School Hikes Through Amazon to Raise Funds

CLAUDE PEPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | MIAMI, FLORIDA

"It was great to earn money for our school while having fun!" exclaimed Carolina Schooley, 5th grader at Claude Pepper Elementary School. The school wellness council at Claude Pepper wanted to find a healthy school fundraiser to replace their annual chocolate sale and found just that through a program called Adventure Fitness.

The program allows a school to select an imaginary destination and then learn about that place through social studies, math and nutrition lessons. Claude Pepper decided to "Discover the Amazon" and students created online profiles and asked for sponsors from friends and family members. Students watched a video broadcast on the school's television network every day while wearing pedometers. The video leads students on an adventure in the Amazon rainforest where they must run away from hungry alligators, piranha filled rivers and stalking jaguars as they make their way to the Lost City of Gold. The PTA helped with recording steps and medals and other prizes were given out to top earners.

Fundraisers Encourage Reading and Running, Continued from Page 1

OLSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | WOODSTOCK, ILLINOIS

"We chose the Mustang March because we wanted to encourage healthy lifestyles and making good choices but we also wanted a fundraiser that would enable us to give as much back to the school as possible rather than share the proceeds with a vendor," said Joyce Lande, president of the Olson Elementary PTO. "We told the students they did not have to collect pledges but they needed to run, skip, hop or jump."

The March was held during the last week of September and students kept track of their laps during PE as well as an additional school period called Mustang Academy, from 1:30-2:00 PM each day. The PTO coordinated their efforts with physical education teacher Melinda Etnyre. Lande said, "She helped us tremendously with setting goals - figuring out how many laps a 5th grader could reasonably do compared to a 1st grader."

Etnyre added, "I was truly amazed by the amount of effort that the students put into this event. We had practiced on the track during the weeks leading up to the event and I had encouraged them to power walk so they would have the endurance to walk for 25 straight minutes 4-5 days a week. However, when they got to the event most students ran!"

Vicky Long, treasurer of the PTO, reports that the March was the most successful fundraiser they have ever done in terms of student participation and money raised. They raised just under \$10,000. "I loved hearing, 'We'll do this again next year, right?' The students were so excited to exercise!"

School nurse Nadine Grismer said that the "excitement was palpable." Grismer said that she saw a 50% reduction in the number of students coming to her office that week. "Those who did come were in a hurry to get back to class so they could go to Mustang March. They would say, 'Do you know how many laps I did yesterday?' That is all they wanted to talk about."

The school community covered 1801 miles during the month. According to Grismer, "On the last day of the March the entire school walked together and it was the most amazing thing to see. The students were so excited. I was pretty emotional watching them and I know I wasn't the only one."

Healthier Options for Birthday Celebrations ROSA PARKS-EDISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

“As Director of Wellness I tried many times over the past few years to convince teachers to ‘change their ways’ when it came to birthday celebrations,” said Roberta Sipe. “It was a daily occurrence for children to bring [birthday] treats in. Often a class would have several birthdays in a day or a week and this all added up to too many calories!”

When second grade teacher Amy Strain finally tired of seeing all the high fat and sugary treats she came up with a new idea for her class. She asked her students to brainstorm ideas for a birthday celebration “menu.” When she shared her idea Sipe asked if she would pilot the program in her classroom, which she did with great success during the 2008-2009 school year.

“The alternative birthday celebrations have brought a greater sense of community to our classroom. The children wait with anticipation to find out what each person has chosen for his or her special celebration and cheer heartily when the announcement has been made. Everyone is included in these special celebrations making it a wonderful way for the children to connect with one another,” said Strain.

Last August, Strain gave a presentation to the rest of the staff and explained how easy it was to implement. She shared that her students realized they did not need to eat sweets at school and they preferred having the opportunity to select a special activity. The entire school has now adopted the birthday “menu” idea and Sipe said, “I have not seen a cupcake or cookie since!”

Teacher Lindsey Smith said, “The ‘Birthday Menu’ has been a huge success in kindergarten. It’s so neat to see the student’s excitement as they choose their special celebration. It really gives each individual child a time to shine and show their personality and creativeness to the rest of their peers.”

The “birthday menu” created at Rosa Parks-Edison Elementary school has been added to the Healthy Schools Program Resource Database.

Some examples from the Kindergarten Birthday Menu from Rosa Parks-Edison Elementary School:

- * **Dance Party:** The birthday boy or girl may bring a favorite CD from home to play while the class dances.
- * **Extra recess:** The class will enjoy 15 minutes of extra outside recess.
- * **Guest Read Aloud:** The birthday boy or girl may choose a special guest and/or a special book to be read aloud to the class.
- * **Painting Time:** The birthday girl or boy may choose for the class to have a special painting time.
- * **Lunch with the teacher:** The birthday boy or girl may spend lunchtime eating in the classroom with his/her teacher.
- * **Overnight Stuffed Animal:** The birthday girl or boy may choose a stuffed animal from the classroom to take home and enjoy overnight!
- * **Special craft:** The birthday boy or girl may lead the class in a craft project of their choosing, such as a foam bookmark or suncatcher.
- * **Extra show-and-tell time:** Every student can bring in a special object from home to share with the class.

