

Head O' Meadow Elementary School Wins Healthier US School Challenge Bronze Award



Photo by The Newtown Bee. Head O' Meadow Elementary School students stood with, top left, Principal Barbara Gasparine, and Lead Teacher Natalie Hammond, second from left, and, in the top right, nutrition staff member Sharon Trudeau, nutrition staff member Mary Ann Choun, and Chartwells School Dining Services Resident Dietitian Jill Patterson, right with plaque, for a photo to commemorate all Newtown Elementary Schools earning HealthierUS School Challenge recognition.

Newtown's Elementary Schools in Newtown, CT are making national news by working to support and improve the health of our children and our community. As part of their effort, healthy items are featured on their menus and physical education and activity are emphasized. Their efforts are part of the HealthierUS School Challenge.

The HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSC) is a voluntary national certification initiative for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. It supports First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign by recognizing schools that are creating healthier school environments through their promotion of good nutrition and physical activity. Sponsored by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the initiative encourages all schools take a leadership role in helping students to make healthier eating and physical activity choices that will last a lifetime. Schools, such as Newtown Elementary Schools that champion the HUSC work hard to make changes to their school nutrition environment in order to (1) improve the quality of the foods served, (2) provide students with nutrition education, and (3) provide students with physical education and opportunities for physical activity.

To qualify for an award, a school must submit a formal application and meet basic criteria set forth by the FNS. The HUSC criteria reflect the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) for foods that should be served in schools, and outside of the organized school lunch meals. Nutrient rich foods including whole grains, dark green vegetables, deep orange-colored vegetables, legumes and low-fat and fat-free milk are a few of the nutrition requirements for the school lunch menu. HealthierUS Schools must also have a local school wellness policy, as mandated by Congress. Schools receiving a HUSC award commit to meeting the criteria throughout their four year certification period.

"I am pleased to inform and congratulate you on Newtown Public Schools being awarded the Healthier US School Challenge (HUSC) Bronze Award for all four of your district's elementary schools. The HUSC is a recognition award for schools that have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in both nutrition and physical education to promote a healthier school environment for children. It is a wonderful accomplishment for the food service department, the students, the school district and the state of Connecticut," said Kyle Bogaert, School Nutrition Programs for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The HUSSC application process was led by Jill Patterson, RD, Chartwells Resident Dietitian for Newtown Public Schools and Dan Shields, Chartwells Foodservice Director for Newtown Public Schools. A team of school professionals who are involved in delivering programs that align with the goals of the HealthierUS Schools Challenge include Judy Blanchard (District Health Coordinator) and Physical Education Teachers: Doug Michlovitz, Nick Drouin, Steve Dreger, Jenny Amato, Laura Cooper, Tony Sortino, Rosanne O'Neill and Jaclyn Lloyd. The following administrators also made this award possible: John Reed, Linda Gejda, JoAnn Peters, Christopher Geissler, Barbara Gasparine and Kathy Gombos. Special recognition is also due to the school nutrition staff, Lorna Szalay, Lorraine Van Veen, Kathleen Coffey, Suellen Braddock, Diane Fisher, Sharon Trudeau, Mary Ann Choun, Nuala Keegan and Melanie Godfrey, for their efforts in achieving school lunch menu changes leading to a HUSSC Bronze award.

For additional information, please visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/awardwinners.html>