

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Improved Wellness Culture Celebrated in Schools Across the District

Charleston, SC – The MUSC Boeing Center for Children's Wellness (BCCW) in partnership with Charleston County School District [celebrated](#) over 80 schools and their wellness efforts Tuesday, May 21, 2019.

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This 11-year-old health initiative was created with the goal of improving nutrition and increasing physical activity for students and staff by motivating districts and schools to make policy, system, and environmental changes.

During the 2018-2019 school year, 48 CCSD schools earned a Wellness Award. The grand prize winner was Mary Ford Elementary School. The second and third place winners were St. Andrew's School of Math and Science and Harbor View Elementary, respectively.

The Roper St. Francis Physicians' Endowment has funded the monetary awards for two years, which range from \$250 to \$2,000. The award money must go into the wellness programs at each school to help grow and sustain their initiatives. In total, almost \$27,800 went to CCSD schools for the 2018-2019 school year. These schools were recognized during the awards ceremony.

In addition, CCSD schools received over \$150,000 in wellness grants this year to fund initiatives such as school gardens, increased water consumption, kinesthetic classrooms, and movement throughout the school day.

"Mary Ford Elementary School, the Grand Prize Winner of the School Wellness Checklist© Contest, did an amazing job this year," said Courtney Hensch, Program Coordinator. "Nurse Charlene and the Mary Ford Wellness Team know that healthy students are better learners. They go above and beyond every day to ensure all of their students have the opportunity to make healthy choices and fun choices."

Mary Ford's school nurse, Charlene Barbot, helped initiate the program to address the high level of behavioral and academic issues among the students.

"We looked at the hierarchy of needs here and decided to start with the basics," said Barbot. "You can't expect children to come in and learn if they're not nourished, hydrated, healthy, and rested. It became very obvious that

students were dehydrated,” explained Barbot. “We distributed water bottles to each student, and started providing water infused with fruits and vegetables.”

Along with that, the school hosted Wellness Days and events throughout the year with themes surrounding not only hydration, but sleep, nutrition, and exercise. Students created artwork related to the themes, performed drama skits for the morning news, and participated in other theme-related activities.

“Each activity allows the students to get immersed in that theme,” said Barbot.

Since the school began participating in the School Wellness Checklist, referrals have declined and little, by little the school is getting parent buy-in.

“Changing the health of the students is just a band-aid if you’re not getting the whole family on board,” said Barbot. “We want to include the families we want to keep families involved by having them serve on the wellness team and participate in events. You can’t just do it for the students. It’s got to be a community effort.”

The initiative is benefiting the community as a whole as well. A parent resource room has been created at the school that includes a food bank, laundry facilities, clothing, air mattresses, bedding and other things to help meet the basic needs of the student’s families.

A Culture of Wellness

The Wellness Checklist has seven categories with various point-weighted actions. For example, the Nutrition category has 22 action items that range from posting nutritional analysis information for each menu item to offering a salad on a daily basis.

“Harbor View Elementary is consistently in the Ttop three schools for the School Wellness Checklist© Contest year after year,” said Hensch. “Under the leadership of Heather Hord and Faith Hostetler, the wellness co-leaders, and a very supportive principal, Harbor View is a prime example of creating a culture of wellness throughout the school for their students and staff. As soon as you walk through the doors at Harbor View, it is clear that wellness isn’t seen as a one-time event there, rather it is the ‘norm’ built into the day-to-day.”

Schools who participate select proven strategies from the School Wellness Checklist© and earn points awarded for each wellness item implemented. The team at the MUSC BCCW partners with teachers, administrators, and district personnel to follow a “train the trainer” model by providing training, resources, and connecting the schools with community partners to increase the sustainability of their wellness programs.

"This year, St. Andrew's School of Math and Science took their wellness initiatives to the next level," said Hensch. "They earned over 100 points more on their School Wellness Checklist© this year than they did during the 17-18 school year - that is huge. It is so exciting to see wellness really take off as much as it did at St. Andrew's this year and to see students, parents, teachers, staff, and administration embrace these growing programs."

For more information about the CCSD and MUSC Boeing Center for Children's Wellness partnership, contact Holly Kut at Holly_Kut@charleston.k12.sc.us.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.