

NEWS RELEASE

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Mississippi in Motion Helps School Staff Become Healthier Role Models

Jackson, MS — A fall wellness program for employees in some Mississippi schools is helping both staff and students improve their health and performance.

In schools, the Mississippi in Motion program is sponsored by an impressive partnership of statewide agencies and organizations, including the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, the Mississippi State University Extension Service, The Bower Foundation, Mississippi State Department of Health, and the Mississippi Department of Education. From the beginning of September through November, over 500 employees in ten school districts are participating in weekly wellness seminars and a variety of health screenings.

“We know that programs to improve the health of school employees are one more way to promote the health of Mississippi students and encourage their academic success,” says Shane McNeill, Director, Office of Healthy Schools. “When students see their adult role models at school eating more fruit, drinking more water and being more physically active, they are more likely to do the same. We know that all students, from kindergarten through high school, who are well nourished, well hydrated and physically fit do better in school.”

As any parent knows, children love to watch and copy the behaviors of the adults around them. By making healthier choices themselves, school employees in the districts of the John D. Bower School Health Network are also helping the students be fit, healthy, and ready to succeed. Positive role modeling for children is just one of many benefits from health promotions programs like Mississippi in Motion. Worksite wellness, in schools and other settings, also improves morale and productivity, reduces absences and injuries, lowers health insurance costs, and increases the ability to attract high quality employees.

The Mississippi in Motion program, developed by Mississippi State University Extension Service, provides health screenings and teaches participants healthy weight management and cooking skills. The weekly wellness presentations, taught by trained health educators and staff from local hospitals, cover important lifestyle topics such as:

- Heart disease and cancer awareness

- Stress management techniques
- Physical activity strategies
- Smoking cessation methods

According to Christine Philley, School Health Administrator in the Office of Healthy Schools, the program is a win-win for staff and students. “Health promotion programs at school can make a big difference in how educators perform their work. Teachers have told us that they have a more positive attitude and more energy for their classroom lessons. They are also more likely to be involved with healthy activities for children, such as a walking club after school or a challenge to get children to eat more fruits and vegetables. Mississippi in Motion is truly helping to create healthy kids, healthy schools and healthy communities in our state.”

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