

Moscow schools land nearly \$1 million grant for fitness ed

Three-year program will teach students active lifestyles

By Sunny Browning, Daily News staff writer

Operating under the "no gym, no problem" model, the physical education faculty at the Moscow Middle School are focusing on keeping students healthy and active while the remodel of the Bear Den is underway.

With the help of a \$956,053 grant over the next three years, the Moscow School District will be able to provide the tools, knowledge and motivation to the students to stay physically fit and active now and for the rest of their lives, no matter what the situation.

"This is a dream grant," PE teacher and lead grant coordinator Jessica Shawley said.

Collaborating with the other teachers in the district, Shawley helped write the prestigious grant, which allowed the district to become one of 67 districts in the nation to receive the 2014 Carol M. White Physical Education Program grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

The district already had many health initiatives in place and teachers are looking forward to implementing K-12 goals that will strengthen the nutrition, health and physical activity learning in each school.

"There is a new paradigm shift in PE programs with the focus on childhood obesity and nutrition. PE programs have changed tremendously," Shawley said. "We are creating a physically literate person with the skills and knowledge to be active for a lifetime."

Shawley said PE programs now have less of an emphasis on competition and team sports and work more to encourage healthy, lifelong fitness that can be applied outside of school. Throughout the year the district sponsors fun runs, family nights, jump rope events and other campaigns that motivate students to continue to make healthy decisions consistently.

"It is more about goal setting than comparing yourself to your peers," Shawley said.

The grant money will help the district attain its goals for strengthening the MSD Wellness Council, implementing classroom activity breaks, integrating healthy eating and nutrition concepts and purchasing the necessary nutrition and fitness equipment for students to integrate into their lives. It will also allow the district to purchase software that will help assess and track students physical activity and nutrition over time.

It will support purchasing heart-rate monitors, cognitive tests, pedometers and professional development by either sending teachers to trainings or bringing trainings into the community.

"This is a big deal. We want parents and the community on board to promote healthy,

active living in kids," Shawley said. "We have a lot going against us in society as far as nutrition is concerned. We want to educate kids now so they have the knowledge to be better informed consumers later on."

Shawley said students will understand the personal fitness journey and how it aligns with making wise and conscious decisions about what to eat and how to develop the skills to meet the goal of being active for at least 60 minutes each day.

She said children learn through play and movement. When the students are active their brains are firing at a higher rate, creating a better environment for them to learn and focus once they are back in class.

The district is promoting the idea of classroom activity breaks to keep learning dynamic and busy. She said they are operating on the saying, "when the bum is numb, the brain is the same."

"This is super exciting, this is where PE needs to be," Shawley said. "It is all about prevention, knowledge and skill building."

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