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92 Indiana Schools Recognized for Commitment to Healthy Students

Local nonprofit group awards grants to schools across the state

Indianapolis, IN (May 19, 2009) – Indiana Action for Healthy Kids has named 92 elementary, middle and high schools recipients with the 2008-2009 Healthy Hoosier School Award – the most ever. The award honors Indiana schools that promote good nutrition and physical activity to students so they are healthy and ready to learn. Now in its fifth year, the Healthy Hoosier School Award is sponsored by the Indianapolis Colts, the Indiana Department of Education, Clarian Health, and the Dairy & Nutrition Council, Inc. of Indiana.

The belief that schools can and must promote healthy eating, physical activity and physical education as part of the solution to the childhood obesity epidemic has created both opportunities and challenges for today's schools. Supporting this belief has led a variety of stakeholders to become leaders in advocating for and implementing wellness initiatives. Because healthy children make better students, and capable, productive student make better communities, schools investing in a healthy environment ensures children of an equal access to an education and greater opportunities for success.

Through the Healthy Hoosier School Award, schools are awarded a Gold, Silver or Bronze level for creating a healthy school environment. The applications are reviewed by a team of health professionals, school officials, and state and community leaders. The highest ranked elementary school and middle/high school will each receive a \$1,000 grant, while three runners-up in each of the school categories will receive a \$500 grant. Schools will use these mini-grants, funded, in part, by the Indianapolis Colts through the NFL's PLAY 60 initiative, to advance wellness programming and initiatives for students and staff. All schools will receive a certificate of recognition and a Healthy Hoosier School Report Card. A complete list of award-winning schools is available at www.IndianaActionForHealthyKids.org.

Says Cathy Whaley, chairperson of Indiana Action for Healthy Kids, "We're thrilled to see the innovative ways school communities are creating healthy learning environments for students across the state. The fact that 92 schools are recognized shows the commitment of Indiana school administrators, educators, school staff, parents, students, community and other decision-makers to help students be healthy."

Healthy Hoosier School Award recipients have demonstrated creative ways to incorporate the needs and interests of students while educating them about the importance of being active every day and making healthy food choices. One student from a Gold Level winning school (Cherry Tree Elementary in Carmel, IN) wrote the following as part of the required student essay, "Our school has organized healthy food choices, which include fresh fruits and vegetables every day, a running club, a wellness fair, and a wellness group that meets once or twice a month to teach kids...about foods we are serving and how we are improving how we eat."

About Action for Healthy Kids

Action for Healthy Kids[®] is a national non-profit organization that addresses the epidemic of overweight, undernourished and sedentary youth by focusing on improving nutrition and physical activity policies and practices in schools. This grassroots public-private partnership of 60 organizations and government agencies supports the efforts of Teams – comprised of more than 11,000 volunteers – in all states and the District of Columbia. The Indiana Action for Healthy Kids Team was formed in October 2002 following the first Healthy Schools Summit. The Team is comprised of health and nutrition professionals, school personnel, parents, and community leaders. To learn more or to get involved with Indiana Action for Healthy Kids, visit www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.

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