To: All Media
From: Central Michigan District Health Dept.
RE: Local Efforts to Fight Childhood Obesity
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“BATTLE AGAINST CHILDHOOD OBESITY OFF TO A ‘GREAT START’ ”

Three Michigan School Districts Use Grant Money
To Confront Nation’s Obesity Epidemic at Early Age

Thanks to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Small Communities Transformation Grant, the Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) has teamed with three Central Michigan school districts to tackle the growing threat of childhood obesity.

Each of three Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), which include a total of eight counties and nearly 450 children, received $18,635.00 in funding for their existing Head Start/Great Start preschool programs. This grant money is planned to increase access to daily physical activity among preschool children in the Bay Arenac ISD, the Crawford, Otsego, Ogemaw, Roscommon (COOR) ISD, and the Mecosta-Osceola ISD (MOISD).

Obesity affects one out of every three children in the United States, and is a serious health condition that can lead to several life-threatening diseases in adults. The two main causes of obesity are a lack of exercise and an unhealthy diet. It is the goal of these grant recipients to combat this epidemic with programs promoting physical activity and proper nutrition among preschoolers, aged 3 to 5.

The Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District’s (MOISD) Great Start Collaborative at the Early Childhood Center in Big Rapids, MI has developed a Physical Activity Policy and an Education Initiative Plan to impact both early learners and their families. It is hoped that this will foster the importance of a physically active lifestyle both in the school day and at home.
In Roscommon County, the COOR ISD has developed a plan to showcase the importance of physical activity in a student’s day, and enhance programs already in place. “Part of our plan is to include “I Am Moving, I Am Learning” into our 4th annual Early Childhood Conference April 26th,” states Christina Tappan, C.O.O.R./Iosco Great Start Collaborative Coordinator. Tappan claims the “I Am Moving, I Am Learning” program is a proactive approach for addressing childhood obesity in Head Start children, and that the program seeks to increase daily physical activity, improve the quality of activities planned and facilitated by adults, and promote healthy food choices every day. “We hope during the conference that attendees will learn the importance of physical activity in a preschooler’s day, and they can leave with some solid ideas on how to promote and use it with our students.”

Each of the three grant awardees provide Head Start programs within their school districts. Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Nationally, Head Start has served more than 30 million children since 1965, and is currently administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start serves over a million children and their families each year in urban and rural areas in all 50 states.

The battle against obesity and poor health in our children, and in our adult populations, will most likely not be won overnight. Sadly, childhood obesity has more than doubled in young children and tripled in adolescents in the past 30 years. The percentage of children aged 6–11 years in the United States who were obese increased from 7% in 1980, to nearly 18% in 2010. Twelve percent of Michigan’s high school students have been in the obese range every year since 2003. It is the hope of CMDHD that through initiatives such as the Head Start program, this race against poor health in our residents can finally be won.

This article was made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for CMDHD’s Together We Can Transform Communities Initiative. 100% of the $1,643,798 Together We Can Transform Communities Initiative fund is financed with Federal funds.

If you would like an opportunity to get involved to prevent obesity, consider joining Together We Can. Together We Can is a community project aimed at improving health status in the
central Michigan area. For more information LIKE Together We Can Health Improvement Council on Facebook, visit our website at www.together-we-can.org or email us at TogetherWeCan@cmdhd.org.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org and LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook.

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