

# Bravo!

## Hats Off to Health – Georgia PTA Member Spotlight



The **Be Well Columbus**, GA Project was held on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 4:00. The event took place at the Columbus State University Soccer Pavilion. This event was co-sponsored along with the Columbus Research Foundation to bring awareness to 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Muscogee County about the growing epidemic of childhood diabetes and childhood obesity. There was a competition between the schools that have registered to participate in this program as our students begin their “walk to Microsoft” in Washington State. Each registered student received a t-shirt and pedometer at this kick-off event. Vendors from local businesses attended to encourage healthy diets and exercise. Field day type events were also held to start the kids off on a more active lifestyle. (See next page for more detailed article.)

### **America's Healthiest Schools: W.C. Britt Elementary** - By Tracy Minkin, *Health.com*

Outstanding, culturally sensitive, creative health-curriculum solutions are among the hallmarks of this large elementary school, and they really got panelist Martin's attention. (She gave W.C. Britt her only perfect 10.) This school keeps its students engaged with taste tests, farm visits, school gardening, community-health-related plays, annual visits from local dentists, and more.

"I love the games, contests, and promotions. We know that when kids are motivated, they do their best work—and that learning goes beyond simply 'preparing for the test.' This program is instilling values that will remain with these students for a lifetime," Martin says.



Our fitness and nutrition panelists liked what they saw, too, but the integration of innovative health initiatives is what put this lively school into the top 10. Martin sums it up: "Community partners, other disciplines, sports, cooking—I wish schools across the country would use this program."

To learn more about the America's Healthiest Schools Program, visit <http://health.msn.com/kids-health/articlepage.aspx?cp-documentid=100232327&GT1=31036>.

**Brown Elementary** – Cobb County PE Teacher of the Year, Katie Weinstein, came up with some innovative and “heart-healthy” ideas to encourage her students to participate in the American Heart Association’s Jump Rope for Heart Campaign. The student who raised the most money got to be the “Teacher for the Day”; the class who raised the most money was recognized with a giant banner hanging over their classroom; and each student who contributed \$40 or more was allowed to sign their name on Ms. Weinstein’s Jump Rope for Heart tee-shirt. The students really enjoyed their participation in the program.

**Nickajack Elementary PTA**, Smyrna – came up with a great fundraising idea to raise money to help pay for a playground make-over. They created a “penny-jar” on the wall to recognize each student who contributed any amount of money toward the campaign. Each student who contributed got to write their name and grade on a paper penny and put it in the “Pennies for our Playground” display. As the jar filled, more and more students enjoyed the feeling of pride in helping build the new playground.

## COLUMBUS, GA SCHOOLS JOIN TOGETHER FOR BE WELL PROJECT

On the afternoon of Saturday, January 17, 2009, schools from around Muscogee County, Georgia participated in the kick-off event of their **Be Well Columbus, GA Project**. The event took place at the Columbus State University Soccer Pavilion in Columbus. The event was co-sponsored along with the Columbus Research Foundation to bring awareness to 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Muscogee County about the growing epidemic of childhood diabetes and childhood obesity. Vendors from local business came to encourage healthy diets and exercise. Field-day-type events started the kids off on a more active lifestyle.



The Be Well Program is promoting an active lifestyle through a virtual “Walk to Microsoft,” a competition between middle schools in Columbus, GA that have registered to participate. Classes will compete with each other to be the first to reach Microsoft in Washington State... all done online! Kids use pedometers to keep track of the miles they walk throughout their week, and then upload the information to the Microsoft Health Vault website, a free, helpful online tool families can use to manage health care information, track progress with weight loss, blood pressure, and much more. Each student received a t-shirt and a pedometer at the kick-off event.

The competition is city-wide and includes all public 7th grade classes. The program will use caloric intake, personal activity, and an interactive map of the United States to show students how far their class has walked as a group along the path from Columbus, GA to Microsoft headquarters in Bellevue, WA. Participating classes will see a computer-generated view on this map of where they are in this walk and what that place looks like. Each student will create an account and design an avatar to resemble them. They will then record their daily meals and snacks which will make the avatar either shrink or grow depending on what was consumed that day.

The Be Well program was created to bring awareness to childhood obesity at a community level. As obesity increases, rates of diabetes and pre-diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol (lipid) disorders are increasing. It is also particularly alarming that the blood pressure of children and adolescents has increased over the past decade.

Dealing with this problem presents parents, physicians and communities with a substantial challenge. Traditional physician visits do not motivate children or adolescents to make lasting and significant lifestyle modifications. Primary care physicians may feel ill-equipped to counsel patients about practical methods for weight loss. Many providers feel pessimistic about their patient's ability to successfully manage their weight and make lifestyle changes. Parents are influential in the genesis of early childhood obesity prenatally, genetically, and through familial influences. Parental involvement, while positive, has not been shown to be very effective in managing weight. Often, the eating habits of parents constitute a negative model, which may adversely influence childhood eating patterns and leads to obesity.

Given the importance of childhood obesity, students here in Columbus, GA will participate individually and as a group to learn better lifestyle habits and track changes in lifestyle. This program offers the opportunity for students to learn positive lifestyle choices and follow and record their own personal lifestyle modifications. Walk to Microsoft allows a grouping of data by classes, so that classes may compete in a city-wide program for lifestyle improvement. Using Microsoft's Route Tracker, as the student logs their distance into Health Vault it is combined with the other students distance in their class thus making the class move along the route to Microsoft in Bellevue, WA. Hopefully by creating enthusiastic adherence to the program by a competition between classes at one school versus others in the program the students will gain better nutrition, exercise, and wellness instruction.

Please visit the Be Well Program's Walk to Microsoft website at:  
[http://www.walktomicrosoft.com/walking\\_to\\_microsoft.html](http://www.walktomicrosoft.com/walking_to_microsoft.html)

To learn more about Microsoft's Health Vault and register your family, or to start your school's own Walk to Microsoft program *for free*, please visit the site online at: <http://www.healthvault.com/personal/index.html>