Kingston Schools Plan for March Health Fair

By Loné Beasley
Chickasaw Nation Media Affairs

Kingston Public Schools will host a on-campus Spring Health Fair designed to increase awareness of the value of making healthy food and lifestyle choices. The event will be conducted Tuesday, March 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the old gym on the Kingston Schools’ site. Macheala Taylor, Kingston Schools’ HealthCorps representative, is calling the fair, “Heroes for Health.”

Booths will center on the organization’s key foundational principles of nutrition, physical activity, and mental resilience. “Everything we do focuses on these three pillars,” Ms. Taylor said. “Activities will include all our wellness pillars, including dance, fitness, yoga, Sahuja meditation, healthy snacks, a smoothie bar, and local resources for students, such as fitness centers.”

Also planned are discussions regarding safe driving and the pitfalls of distracted driving. The Chickasaw Nation currently sponsors HealthCorps programs in public schools in Kingston, Byng, Latta, and Davis.

HealthCorps is a 501e 3) organization founded in 2006 by Dr. Oz, host of “The Dr. Oz Show,” and attending physician at the New York Presbyterian-Columbia Medical Center. Its goal is to “make students happier and more productive by giving them everyday skills in nutrition, fitness, and resilience.”

Miss Taylor, who offices at Kingston High School, worships daily with students, teachers, and administrators to achieve better health outcomes.

In December, classes participated in a Door Decorating Contest in which designs focused on having a healthy holiday season. Winners were treated to a healthy breakfast, consisting of mini-bagels, low-fat cream cheese, fruit parfaits, Greek yogurt, granola, and fruit.

Once a month Ms. Taylor is host to “Café O’ Yea” in which students are instructed on a variety of health-related topics. A recent Café O’ Yea featured sugar as its subject matter.

“I had five different kinds of beverages and asked students to guess how much sugar each had and then taught them how to calculate how many teaspoons of sugar each contained based upon their labels.”

Sugar gogles donated by Atkins were used in a game in which students donned a virtual reality headset. The object was to make healthy choices to keep their blood sugar stabilized by negotiating hoops that offered them choices between, for instance, yogurt or a sports drink, or unsweetened iced tea or milk.

“We’ve also had a session on essential oils and a lesson on the value of positive thoughts and how being positive impacts your mental and physical health,” Ms. Taylor said.

“Another of our efforts featured a Blessing Box filled with personal care items such as toothpaste, deodorant, travel size body soaps, mouthwash, feminine products, snacks, pencils, paper – anything a student might need,” she said. “The goal was to take away the issue of not having everything a student needs for hygiene or school supplies, as a way of increasing self-esteem.”

Ms. Taylor says the Blessing Box can also be used by students who simply forget to take one of these items to school. “We encourage all students to use the box.

Perhaps, when they go to the store with their parents they might say, ‘Oh, I used some deodorant the other day from the Blessings Box. Can we pick up a couple of extra items to resupply it?’

Ms. Taylor says 25 students form a Kingston High School HealthCorps Club that meets weekly to plan Café O’ Yea and other activities.

“This week we had a potluck lunch in which I challenged the students to bring their favorite dish and to make a healthy alternative of it. Instead of using so much butter in cookies, they should try using apple sauce or a sugar alternative or not as much sugar.”

Ms. Taylor is originally from Tahumingo. She earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Oklahoma and is currently working on her master’s degree in public health from Oklahoma State University.

She said students, parents, and grandparents are invited to attend “Heroes for Health.”

MHS

[Image of MHS logo]
Ivan Silva joined the ranks of HealthCorps, a national health and wellness nonprofit organization founded by Dr. Mehmet Oz to gain public health experience before he began medical school. Through the organization, Silva works with 3,400 students at Upland (Calif.) High School, instilling the organization's key foundational principles of nutrition, physical activity, and mental resilience through classes, clubs, and mentorship.

Silva, a native of Highland, Calif., was among dozens of HealthCorps coordinators based at schools across the U.S. who converged in Chickasaw Country for a week-long training last month.

The HealthCorps “Annual Winter Training,” conducted Jan. 28-31, at the Chickasaw Retreat and Conference Center, brought together HealthCorps coordinators, staff, and board members for professional development training. A midweek luncheon provided an opportunity for stakeholders to hear firsthand the positive impact of the programs.

The Chickasaw Nation and HealthCorps joined forces six years ago to transform health outcomes for students in select schools in Southern Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Nation currently sponsors HealthCorps programs in Kingston, Byng, Latta, Tishomingo, and Davis Public Schools.

Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby said the program aligns with the tribe's mission, “We are always looking for ways to improve the quality of life of our people, and we want to improve the quality of life of the people who are around us.”

“HealthCorps does just that. We are so thankful we have the opportunity to see firsthand this beneficial program which empowers young people to change their lives for the better,” he said. Machaelle Taylor serves as the HealthCorps coordinator for Kingston Public Schools. A Tishomingo native and Choctaw Nation citizen, Ms. Taylor was born in Ada at a Chickasaw Nation Medical Facility. “The Chickasaw Nation has been a part of my life since the very beginning,” she said. Ms. Taylor said she appreciates the program's overarching goal of giving back to the community.

Shelby Gibson is the HealthCorps coordinator for Latta Public Schools. A native of Gilbert, Ariz., Ms. Gibson earned a degree in public health from Brigham Young University.

Erica Sun serves Tishomingo High School as a HealthCorps coordinator. A Detroit native, she graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in dance, life science, and psychology. And, she earned a Master of Science in exercise physiology from Eastern Michigan University.

During the Winter Training, Ms. Sun led a presentation about the Chickasaw Nation's “Family Mealtime Blessing Campaign,” an initiative to encourage and promote conversations around the dinner table.

Through the initiative, HealthCorps coordinators work with their schools and communities through cooking programs, video projects, and community events.

The five participating high schools also conduct “pre and post” intervention surveys to ascertain changes in students' perception of family meals and barriers to family mealtime.

Mechel Dickerson works with the students of Byng Schools. A native of Ada, she is a graduate of Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Science in public health.

Candace Shy serves as the HealthCorps coordinator for Davis Schools. A Georgia native, she earned a degree in health and community wellness from the University of West Georgia. “HealthCorps has been the biggest blessing in my life,” she said.

Founded in 2003, by Dr. Mehmet Oz, host of “The Dr. Oz Show,” and attending physician at New York Presbyterian-Columbia Medical Center, HealthCorps is a nonprofit organization whose goals include making students happier and more productive by giving them everyday skills in nutrition, fitness, and resilience.

HealthCorps' mission is to unleash the power of America's youth, so they can live productive lives.

To learn more about HealthCorps programs, please visit www.healthcorps.org