

Press Release

From: Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center

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Contact: Nancy Lanoue 802-885-2126

nlanoue@vermontel.net

The Precision Valley Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Consortium has been notified by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration that a 3 year grant submitted in September, 2005 to increase nutrition education and physical activity opportunities for middle school youth and their families has been awarded in the amount of \$149,717 for the first year of funding. The project is called "30+5," which stands for "30 minutes of exercise and 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily." This is a guideline currently accepted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a basic goal to achieve for improved nutrition and physical activity.

The Precision Valley PAN Consortium 30+5 Rural Health Services Outreach (RHSO) Grant is one of 65 awarded nationwide and is the only RHSO award given to a Vermont consortium. Several core partners have committed matching staff time, planning time, space, and expertise to complete the work involved in reaching the outcomes required in the grant. They are: Springfield Hospital, Mt. Ascutney Hospital, Springfield School District, Windsor School District, Black River Produce, Southeastern Vermont Community Action, Vermont Department of Health, and Windsor County Head Start. Many representatives from these organizations have participated in planning meetings including Riverside Middle School, Springfield School Board, Southern Vermont Recreation Center, Springfield Recreation Department, Springfield Family Center, SEVCA and the SEVCA Good Buy Store, Town of Windsor, and Windsor Recreation Department. Southern Vermont Area Health Education Center will be responsible for the fiscal, personnel, and data management of the project.

Nancy Lanoue, Executive Director of Southern Vermont AHEC attributes the receipt of the RHSO grant to the determination and collaborative efforts of the consortium on this project over the past two years.

“We submitted the grant in 2004 and got our first score along with concrete suggestions on how to improve the activities so that our outcomes would be measurable. For the past year the consortium has been meeting to develop strategies to follow these suggestions for improvement on the first score. Everyone involved feels so good about this award and proud that our efforts paid off. We went from a score of 79 on the first submission to a score of 95 on the second,” said Lanoue.

With the funding from the grant, middle school nurses in Windsor and Springfield will have access to a registered dietitian, as will pediatricians and family practice physicians serving families of middle school age children. For families who would like assistance in paying fees for recreation, fitness, and sports activities, a scholarship program will be available for approximately 130 families. The “Try It” Store (made possible with fresh produce donated by Black River Produce, Springfield, VT), now operating at the SEVCA Good Buy Store on Tuesdays from 1-4 will expand to one afternoon per week in Windsor.

Additionally, a fitness education program called Fit and Healthy, Kid Style, which has shown great success in Windsor through Mt. Ascutney Hospital, will be offered in both communities.

“Our goal is to help youth improve nutrition and build life-long habits of regular exercise by adding to, and enhancing opportunities already available in the community,” said Lanoue.

Tracey Hayes, Community Health Outreach Director for Mt. Ascutney Hospital added, “We selected this age group because they are forming their lifelong attitudes toward fitness and nutrition. We will be there to help them meet fitness goals and develop habits that will help lead to a lifetime of healthy bodies and healthy minds.”

The Project Coordinator is Nancy Schaefer. She has most recently worked as Coordinator of Springfield in Motion for the past two years. The project office will be housed at the Springfield Family Center at 365 Summer Street. The 30+5 project is now recruiting a Program Assistant, who will work 28 hours per week in both communities recording data for outcome measures and connecting youth and families to fitness activities. Bachelors level education and experience in community health or related fields

are required. Resumes may be sent to the attention of Nancy Lanoue, Southern Vermont AHEC, 65 Summer Street, Box 151, Springfield, VT 05156.