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For immediate release

School program expanding to fight rising childhood obesity

With support from Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Foundation, Greater Flint Health Coalition partners with University of Michigan to bring Project Healthy Schools to Grand Blanc Middle Schools.

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – In Michigan more than 30 percent of youth ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese.

With support from the Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Foundation the Greater Flint Health Coalition, and the University of Michigan Health System are taking aim at children's unhealthy habits by expanding the [Project Healthy Schools](#) wellness program to [Grand Blanc Middle Schools](#).

Grand Blanc Middle School students will learn heart-healthy habits to help reduce their future risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

"Children who are obese are much more likely to become obese adults," says [Kim Eagle, M.D.](#), a cardiologist and a director of the [U-M Cardiovascular Center](#). "And we know that obese adults are much more likely to have a whole variety of problems, which can include high cholesterol, premature cardiovascular disease, sleep apnea, diabetes, high blood pressure and sudden cardiac arrest."

"We don't have to be an obese nation," adds Eagle, who founded Project Healthy Schools in 2004. "We can change our culture to be healthier and we can start that in schools."

While Project Healthy Schools targets sixth-graders through direct classroom instruction, the entire student body benefits. In this new partnership with the Greater Flint Health Coalition, elements of the Coalition's existing Commit to Fit! campaign will be incorporated in Project Healthy School's lessons as part of a county-wide campaign to improve Genesee County's health behaviors.

"In Genesee County / Flint, our community has long experienced challenges with the practice of poor health behaviors relative to physical activity, nutrition, and smoking. In this new partnership with Project Healthy Schools and Commit to Fit!, we will seek to build the practice of lifelong healthy behaviors into our community's youth," says Kirk Smith, president & chief executive officer of the Greater Flint Health Coalition.

The program includes collaboration with the cafeteria, communication with parents and staff, development of a school wellness team, measurement of program success, and organization of a fun year-end activity to celebrate the program.

Students celebrate health through school-wide assemblies and other programs that each school may develop such as walking clubs, field days and planting a school garden. Grand Blanc students held a pep rally and fund-raiser on Sept. 28 to kick-off what is expected to be a healthy school year.

The University of Michigan's Project Healthy Schools' teaches and inspires students to incorporate five simple goals into their daily lives:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Make better beverage choices
- Perform at least 150 minutes of exercise each week
- Eat less fast and fatty foods
- Spend less time in front of a screen

More than [13,000 Michigan middle school students](#) and their teachers have participated in Project Healthy Schools, which is one of the few programs of its kind in the nation to demonstrate significant benefits among participants, including reductions in cholesterol and high blood pressure.

The collaborative effort by the U-M includes various foundations, community organizations, health care providers and public schools.

In partnership with the Greater Flint Health Coalition, Genesys Health System will mentor programs at Grand Blanc schools, just as Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak and Memorial Healthcare in Owosso use the Project Healthy Schools model to help children in their communities.

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On the Web:

University of Michigan Project Healthy Schools
<http://www.projecthealthyschools.org/>

Greater Flint Health Coalition
<http://www.gfhc.org/>

Commit to Fit
<http://www.commit-2-fit.org>

Grand Blanc Community Schools
<http://grandblanc.schoolfusion.us/>