



## Close Knit Community—Close Knit SHAC Alexander County Schools

Alexander County initiated one of the first School Healthy Advisory Councils (SHAC) in the state. To preserve longevity, leaders and members work to maintain a strong, active council. One gem they have discovered—support and encourage your volunteers. SHAC leaders set the stage for each meeting with a theme. Members share a healthy school lunch and quality discussion. At year end, SHAC members are recognized for their volunteerism. This encouragement translates into extra effort in the schools to make a difference in the lives of students and staff.

School nurses strive to teach all students about the importance of nutrition and fitness with hands-on activities, covering topics ranging from MyPyramid and sugary beverages to fad diets and the risks of being overweight and eating disorders. Nurses also reach out to families by presenting at PTA meetings.

Teachers keep students active through Energizers, Dance Dance Revolution and workout videos. All elementary

schools participate in the American Heart Association Jump Rope for Heart and the President's Challenge for physical fitness. Third through fifth grade girls can participate in "Girl Power" afterschool. The enrichment program covers nutrition, fitness, body image, self-esteem and other health issues and concludes with walking or running on the school track. Students work toward completing a 5K. For all, the activity translates into better academic performance.

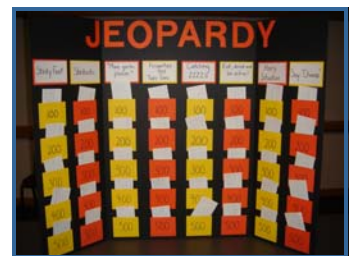
Students also receive the health message in the cafeteria. Alexander County Schools have implemented the N.C. Nutrition Standards. Child Nutrition Services (CNS) participates in the Farm to School program purchasing locally grown fruits and vegetables. Students have access to these healthy choices every day in the cafeteria. CNS allows students to choose unlimited fruits and vegetables with a school meal at no additional charge. Cafeteria staff work to make the nutritious produce more enticing by sectioning fruits and vegetables into child-size portions.

Both the SHAC and school administration recognize that personnel set a crucial example for students in terms of health and wellness. With this buy-in and support, school staff took off paving a path to wellness. East Middle held an afterschool walking challenge tracking miles from New York to Florida. Staff at West Middle walked virtually from Maine to Miami. Ellendale Elementary staff set their own routes tracking steps with pedometers. Wittenberg Elementary showed their creativity and spirit with the "Jingle Bell Jiggle Off". Taylorsville Elementary and Alexander Central High took the team approach with a staff wellness survivor challenge. Annually, all schools participate in the Relay for Life bringing the community together to walk, jog or run in a challenge to battle cancer. Staff teams also play in a rag ball tournament in memory of a Sugar Loaf Elementary teacher.

The passion for life and appreciation for community are quite evident in Alexander County, of which schools are the heart and children are the future.



Alexander School Health Advisory Council Meeting



"Hygiene Jeopardy" for Classroom Lessons and Health Fairs

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