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Saturday, December 15, 2007

Troy

Wattles gets top health grade

Right food and exercise earns award for Troy school

Shawn D. Lewis / The Detroit News

TROY -- Jocelyn Bashi runs over to embrace the principal in the Wattles Elementary School cafeteria.

"That was the best grilled cheese sandwich ever," says Jocelyn, 10, smiling up at Judy Garrett and showing off her new red and green braces. "I always get the grilled cheese sandwich. And the muffin was so good."

Such exuberance over cafeteria food is not uncommon at Wattles, which recently won the 2007 Healthy School Award presented by the Oakland County Health Division, in partnership with the University of Detroit Mercy. The award recognizes Oakland County schools with outstanding health environments.

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The division sent out queries to 264 schools, and 81 responded. Among the 35 markers on the questionnaire were quality of foods served in the cafeteria, amount of physical activity provided during the day and overall efforts to make the school healthier. Wattles won in all categories. In addition to a trophy, the school won \$1,000, which it will use to purchase gym equipment.

"I know parents want to feel comfortable their children will have good food choices in the cafeteria," said Garrett, who is reviewing holiday party letters being sent to parents. "I want to make sure we're asking for things like veggie trays and fruits along with the regular treats."

After standing in line Tuesday for baked chicken nuggets, a warm muffin, milk and 100 percent juice, students filled their plates with lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, tomatoes and orange slices from the salad bar. School cook Dee Honkanen, who has worked in the cafeteria for 25 years, said none of the food is fried and there's no added sugar or salt.

The school also promotes physical activity and sponsors a mileage club. "Students can go out at recess and earn points for running and jogging," said Garrett. "Then they can get a sports pencil as a little reward."

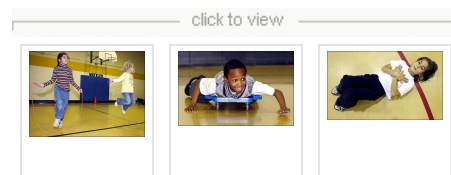
Jenna Schada, 10, of Troy, said she's proud the school earned top honors. "They're letting us know it's not good to bring bad things to eat for snacks," she said. "That lets me know they really care."

Second-place winner was Woodland Elementary in Troy, in the Avondale School District, and third place went to William Grace Elementary in Farmington Hills.

"Wattles seems to be an exemplary school in every aspect," said Karen Cipriani, health education supervisor at the Oakland County Health Division.



Wattles Elementary, which won the 2007 Healthy School Award, promotes good eating habits and exercise for students like second-graders Yamini Polcum, 7, left, and Rachael Eads, 8. The Oakland County Health Division, in partnership with the University of Detroit Mercy, presented the award. (Gary Malerba / Special to The Detroit News)



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