



Muscofee County School District

P.O. Box 2427 • Columbus, Georgia 31902

For Immediate Release

Valerie Fuller, Director of Communications

Telephone: (706) 748-2034

www.mcsdga.net

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NEWS RELEASE

Be Well Columbus Project: Walk to Microsoft Arnold Magnet Academy Wins First Place

(Columbus, GA)- The Columbus Research Foundation and the Muscofee County School District Council PTA are proud to announce the winners of the **Be Well Columbus Project: Walk to Microsoft** contest winners.

1st Place-Arnold Magnet Academy

(7th Grade Homeroom of Language Arts Teacher Ronda Allen)

2nd Place-Marshall Middle School

(7th Grade Homeroom of Language Arts Teacher Sara Davis)

3rd Place-Arnold Magnet Academy

(7th Grade Homeroom of Life Science Teacher Melissa Niemi)

4th Place-Arnold Magnet Academy

(7th Grade Homeroom of Language Arts Teacher Ellen Posey)

Ronda Allen, and each of the participating students in her homeroom (20), will receive a Nintendo Wii, Wii Fit, and a game of their choice (\$400.00 value). Prizes and awards will also be distributed to other winning homerooms and individual walkers. An award

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ceremony is scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2009, at Arnold Magnet Academy, located at 2011 51st Street. The project is funded by a \$249,000 grant from the Microsoft HealthVault Be Well Fund.

Representatives from Microsoft HealthVault will be on location Monday, May 18, 2009 to film interviews with students, teachers, and parents. The video will run as a health story on the HealthVault website, www.healthvault.com. In addition, the video will be made available to the American Diabetes Association.

The Be Well Columbus Project is a pilot program implemented through the Muscogee County School District middle schools (7th grade). The Bell Well Fund is designed to stimulate non-profit research and development of innovative on-line solutions to improve health and wellness. Two-hundred proposals from leading academic and research health organizations across the United States were submitted. The Columbus Research Foundation was one of only fifteen recipients. Among the distinguished panel of judges who determined the recipients was Mr. Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and founder of the Center for Health Transformation.

The Be Well Columbus Project initiative kicked off January 17, 2009, and will end April 24, 2009. Ten of twelve middle schools participated with 950 students and 90 teachers who volunteered to sign up. Seventh grade students were chosen because:

- ❖ There is a growing prevalence of childhood obesity and its associated medical issues, mainly pre-diabetes, diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol disorders.
- ❖ This age group is at risk for obesity, is image conscience, is computer literate and has the aptitude to learn lifelong health habits.

The objective is for adolescents to learn positive lifestyle choices through integration of tracking daily physical activity and food choices and storing this data online. The project is a city-wide competition among homerooms and hinges on an interactive website, www.walktomicrosoft.com, which was developed by VROOOOM Technology specifically for this venture. The website uses Microsoft applications; therefore each phase of design had to be approved by Microsoft. The registration process was twofold: participants first created an account at www.healthvault.com and registered by school and homeroom on the website. There are several essential components of the program and its success.

- ❖ Participants who wear pedometers and log daily physical activity in miles or steps on the website as they take a “virtual walk” across the country and end at Microsoft HealthVault in Bellevue, Washington.
- ❖ As milestone markers are reached, incentive prizes are awarded, including new tennis shoes.

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- ❖ Homerooms can view their position in the competition on a website map. Real-time reporting indicates rankings by school, homeroom and individual walkers.
- ❖ Daily food intake is logged and a red, green or yellow light appears based on caloric, cholesterol and fat values. A graph of the three colors indicates, by percentage, how healthy they have been eating since the first log in.
- ❖ The ultimate goal is for the graph to become greener as the project winds down.
- ❖ Participants are required to log in their height and weight at the first and last log in. The statistics reflect any changes in Body Mass Index (BMI).
- ❖ A very fit “Bee” Well mascot was designed and a contest was held to name the bee. “Stinger” was chosen. Two students came up with the same name. Each received \$100.00.



“Stinger”

For more information, please e-mail communications@mcsdga.net , or call Pamela Tinkler at the Columbus Research Foundation (706) 507-2026.

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