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EXCELA HEALTH BRINGS PROJECT FIT AMERICA TO DERRY AREA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Initiative now in 4 area schools and benefiting more than 2,500 children and their families

DERRY, PA, Oct. 13, 2017 … Excela Health officials join Derry Area School District administrators, teachers and students to celebrate the launch of Project Fit America (PFA) at Derry Area Middle School.

The celebration, scheduled for 1:30 p.m., October 18, includes a ribbon cutting as well as an exercise demonstration by students and Pittsburgh Pirates Pierogi Mascot “Oliver Onion,” using the school’s new outdoor fitness equipment.

“Our school loves to be challenged to do the best we can do for our students. We did not have any outside fitness equipment for our students to use during the school day or when they visit our campus in the summer months or after school. Our physical education teachers are eager to learn new strategies to incorporate healthy living skills into the lives of our students. The PFA is a great asset to accomplish these goals.” said Lisa Dubich, principal.

At Excela Health, we’re passionate about improving wellness in the communities we serve, and we especially want to do our part in the fight against childhood obesity,” said Albert J. Novak, Jr., vice president and Chief Development Officer, under whose purview the health system’s foundations function. “We’re pleased to partner with Derry Area Middle School and the community to empower these children and their families to learn healthy habits and enjoy healthier lives. Project Fit America helps foster healthy habits at an age when adolescents are coming into their own regarding decision making. We
are hopeful that what they learn through this program stays with them for a lifetime, and helps them guard against the chronic illnesses that inactivity can foster.”

“All Derry Area Middle School students are being taught how to use the outdoor equipment and how activity benefits their bodies,” said physical education teacher Heather Krehlik. The PFA curriculum, including indoor and outdoor exercises, addresses fitness areas such as upper body strength, coordination, flexibility and more. Krehlik noted the initiative goes beyond traditional fitness and is also is helping students to build social skills, character and leadership skills.

Since 2014, Excela Health, through its foundations, has been giving grants to area schools for this initiative. Previous recipients include Greater Latrobe Junior High School in Latrobe, Norwin Hillcrest Intermediate School in North Huntingdon and Franklin Regional Heritage Elementary School in Murrysville

The grant provides state-of-the-art fitness equipment specifically designed to address the deficit areas where children fail fitness tests; indoor fitness equipment; installation of the equipment, a dynamic curriculum with games, activities and challenges for children with the PFA outdoor and indoor equipment. The program also teaches character development, sportsmanship, teamwork and leadership skills. The academic emphasis is to create “physically educated” children and to empower them to take personal responsibility of their health with enthusiasm. PFA also provides support to the schools for two years along with on-site training with each physical education teacher.

“Research supports that physical education is not only important for a child’s physical development, it actually helps kids read and learn math. Physically active kids are better learners. Quality fitness in education has a direct impact not only a child’s health but their academic success,” said Stacey Cook, Project Fit America Executive Director, “We are extremely proud of Excela Health for their commitment to bring this program to the community and for their dedication to improving the health and wellness of children.”
Project Fit America is in its 28th year of working with more than 1,000 schools in 300 cities across 46 states. Schools report increased motivation, participation and physical improvements in their students, along with parents and faculty becoming more involved in choosing fitness activities over sedentary lifestyle habits.

Fast Facts on the benefits of physically active children.

Better thinking skills. Studies show that people who exercise more are sharper mentally. The effects may be almost immediate. One study found that kids scored higher on math and reading comprehension tests after exercising for 20 minutes.

More confidence. Studies have found that kids who are physically active are more confident. In turn, that confidence may improve their academic performance, too. Active kids tend to get better grades. Though there could be a lot of reasons for that, including brain benefits, part of it may be better self-confidence.

Better moods. Many studies have found that kids who exercise feel happier. Physical activity releases brain chemicals that are natural stress fighters. Just about any physical activity seems to help. Physically active kids are better at managing their moods and have fewer mood swings, too.

Sounder sleep. Kids who exercise regularly fall asleep faster than other kids. They also stay asleep longer. The more vigorous the activity, the bigger the sleep benefit. Getting enough sleep lifts moods, improves judgment, and boosts memory.

Fast Facts – Childhood Obesity in the United States

Since 1980, the U.S. Surgeon General reports the rates of childhood obesity have tripled. Government estimates say there are 6 million American children who are now overweight and an additional 5 million who are on the threshold of becoming overweight.

Doctors are seeing more children with what we typically consider adult diseases such as gallbladder disease, sleep apnea and Type 2 diabetes.

Health experts indicate this may be the first generation not expected to outlive their parents due to the health problems associated with obesity.