



Harford County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 30, 2010

Five HCPS schools receive grant money for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Five Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) have been selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) for the 2010-11 school year: Magnolia, Hall's Cross Roads, Edgewood, William Paca/Old Post Road and George D. Lisby Elementary at Hillside elementary schools.

Funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program was made available through section 19 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. The purpose of the program is to increase elementary school children's consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, to expose elementary school students to new fruits and vegetables, to improve healthy eating habits and to help elementary schools create healthier school food environments.

"This program will certainly contribute to the development of healthy eating habits. Moreover, it will reinforce the importance of agriculture to the vitality of the Harford County economy," said Superintendent of Schools Robert M. Tomback.

Participating elementary schools were chosen through a discretionary grant process. The level of funding provided to any one school depended on the enrollment of the school. Based on October 2009 data on total school enrollment at the selected schools, each selected school is eligible to spend approximately \$50 per child per year to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to all enrolled students. These schools are eligible to spend up to the following amounts on the FFVP through June 30, 2011:

Magnolia Elementary School:	\$28,150.00
Hall's Cross Roads Elementary School	\$22,300.00
Edgewood Elementary School:	\$21,700.00
William Paca/Old Post Road Elementary School:	\$50,250.00
George D. Lisby Elementary at Hillside School:	\$16,650.00

A small percentage of operating funds may be used for expenses such as the preparation and distribution of the fruits and vegetables, and 10 percent of the total grant award may be used for administrative expenses. However, the project is structured so that maximum benefits go directly to children.

"This program has been very successful in exposing the students to fruits and vegetables they normally would not try," said HCPS Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Gary A. Childress. "Some of these students are now asking their parents to have these available at home. Karen Olsen, food services dietitian, has been instrumental in bringing this program and grant to HCPS and has implemented the program at these schools. We are proud to be part of this and always happy to support the education process."

Schools were selected by the Maryland State Department of Education based on guidance and oversight by USDA and the following criteria: to the maximum extent possible, highest priority is given to schools with the highest proportion of children who are eligible for free and reduced price meals, and at minimum, schools must have 50 percent or more of its students eligible for free and reduced price meals; schools must be elementary schools; and schools must operate the National School Lunch Program.

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HCPS continues to strive to serve healthy, affordable meals. Nearly five million healthy meals are served during the school year at HCPS, and more than half a million dollars is presently allocated to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. In 2009, HCPS was awarded the District of Excellence in School Nutrition distinction by the School Nutrition Association for exceeding national best practice standards for school nutrition programs. Currently, there are only 30 Districts of Excellence in the country. Harford County marked the 30th district – and the only district in Maryland in 2009 – to make the distinguished list.

In addition, HCPS participates in the Maryland Home Grown School Week, which provides students with food selections that include locally grown agricultural products and features several hands-on activities. This year, HCPS will serve as the kick-off host of the third annual event, which will take place at Edgewood Elementary School, one of the schools selected to participate in the FFVP. Edgewood Elementary School's focus on healthy eating and its involvement in classroom breakfast, the fresh fruits and vegetable program, as well as the after-school snack, has been very impressive. The official kick-off of the event will take place Friday, September 10, 2010, and continue through the following week.

“Edgewood Elementary School is thrilled to be included in both the FFVP and the Maryland Homegrown week kickoff and events,” said Edgewood Elementary School Principal Lisa B. Sundquist. “Students embraced the fresh fruit snack each afternoon when we were able to have it in the last quarter of this past school year. For some students, it was the first time they had ever eaten fresh pineapple or mango. Giving students the ability to include healthy food choices in their day as a habit is fabulous. One of our parents reported that now when they go to the grocery store, her child is requesting that they buy some of the same fruits and vegetables that they have had in the program. The benefit to our students, both physically and academically, is immeasurable. So many of our students get the majority of their daily meals when they are at school. It is our responsibility to make sure they have a full array of nutritious foods available to them.”

For more information on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ffvp/ffvpdefault.htm>.

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