

Schools' participation in fitness program rises

By Penny Riordan, Times Staff Writer

Linton Springs was again named Carroll County's healthiest elementary school this year for participating in Project ACES, the school system's annual fitness challenge

Fully 84 percent of those students attending the Eldersburg school turned in their fitness entries. Of those students, 98 percent met the goal of 60 minutes of physical activity every day for two weeks in October. The school also had the most staff members participate, with 84 percent meeting that goal.

Across the county, 75 percent of students turned in entry forms, and 76 percent of those students met the goal. Three private schools also participated: Carroll Lutheran School, Gerstell Academy and North Carroll Community School.

Project ACES, which stands for Active Children Excel in School, is an annual challenge to encourage elementary school children to exercise daily. Since the program started in 2000, participation has grown steadily from about 1,000 students to nearly 9,000 students.

This year, the two schools that improved the most over last year's performances were Charles Carroll Elementary School and Ebb Valley Elementary School.

Last year, 67 percent of Ebb Valley student turned in entry forms compared to 80 percent this year.

Chris Vaughn, who teaches health and physical education, said this year it was easier for teachers and students to focus on the challenge.

Last fall, the Manchester school had just opened, so many teachers were concentrating on helping students adjust to their new surroundings.

This fall, the teaching staff was able to support the students and remind them to think about exercise, he said.

"The staff was really asking the kids, 'Are you doing this at home?'" he said.

Charles Carroll Elementary saw its staff participation increase from 43 percent to 73 percent this year. The jump was enough to earn the Silver Run school second place in the staff portion of the challenge.

Liz Perna, who teaches health and physical education at the school, said this year she and physical education teacher Bryan Trumbo really pushed the staff.

"Most of the people were doing stuff; it was just a matter of writing it down," Perna said.

This year, the school also held a fun run to open the challenge, which helped people stay motivated. Many of school's staff participated in the run, she said.

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