



Generation With Promise

“Eat Better, Move More, Don’t Smoke”. These three simple steps will lead to better health for future generations. Childhood obesity is a serious and growing problem in Michigan and in Berrien County. Overweight children have a higher likelihood of being obese as adults, increasing their risk for several chronic diseases. Besides obesity being a problem, among Michigan students, half of the current smokers in grades nine to twelve report that they began smoking between age 11 and 14. While education around these issues is critical, information does not easily transfer into behavior change if students do not have the opportunity and support to make healthy choices during their day and throughout their school experience.

Benton Harbor Schools, Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) along with the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Michigan’s Surgeon General and the Michigan Department of Community Health have teamed up to implement Generation with Promise in Benton Harbor.

The Generation With Promise project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, links the

Governor’s **Cities of Promise** (cities with high poverty rates, poor health status, safety/security issues, and infrastructure challenges) with the **Michigan Steps Up** healthy lifestyles initiative led by the Michigan Surgeon General and the Michigan Department of Community Health. This unprecedented project aims to

Benton Harbor Area Schools’ two middle schools were chosen to participate in the project with eight other schools in Michigan.

achieve and sustain change at the policy, environment and individual levels in schools/communities with racial and ethnic health disparities by empowering middle school youth. “Obesity and tobacco use will continue to have a devastating impact on Michigan’s health and economy if we do not invest in prevention today,” states Michigan’s Surgeon General, Dr. Kimberlydawn Wisdom. Benton Harbor Area Schools’ two middle schools, Fair Plain Renaissance Middle School and Hull Middle School were chosen to participate in the three-year project (at \$25,000 per year per school) with eight other schools from Detroit,

Hamtramck, Pontiac and Highland Park.

This project will empower and support Student Action Teams. The unique approach taken in this project hinges around youth involvement, mentorship, and youth-to-youth networking. Middle school students will be actively and continually involved in the change process-making decisions, planning actions, prioritizing needs, participating in and promoting new opportunities to make healthy choices at school as well as



leading through examples. As they gain leadership skills and generate best practices for making policy, environmental, and personal behavior change, they will work with and support students at others schools to get involved in the important and exciting process of making their school a healthier place to learn. Students will have an annual opportunity to showcase their progress and outcomes, recommend strategies based on their successes, and brainstorm together across geographic, cultural and demographic lines at an annual Youth Summit.

It is the goal is to ultimately build youth leadership skills in schools today for our communities tomorrow.



Special thanks to Shannon Larry-Burton for her help with this article!

Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



Healthy Hearts Month

February is Healthy Hearts month. This month, the health department will be bringing you information on Stress and Heart Disease, Heart Smart, Generation with Promise, and Healthy Lifestyles. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

Targeted areas of change for the Generations With Promise project are consistent with the federally-mandated local wellness policy:

- Nutrition education and Healthy eating emphasis
- Food/Nutrition standards
- Physical education and physical activity opportunities
- Other school-based activities designed to promote student wellness.



For more information about this project please feel free to contact Lisa Peoples-Hurst, Project Coordinator at 927-5690 or Shannon Larry-Burton, Assistant Project Coordinator at 927-5692.

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles	Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500	21 N. Elm
			756-2008

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

This page is sponsored by the Berrien County Health Department

