

Poteau Among Five Grant Recipients

The Board of Directors for the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) have awarded incentive grants to five school districts that have implemented strategies to promote health and wellness for students and staff.

The board of directors on Thursday approved a total of \$24,500 in incentive grants to Afton Public Schools, Antlers, Public Schools, Millwood Public Schools, Pleasant Grove Public Schools and Poteau Public Schools.

TSET offers incentive grants to school districts that have been recognized as Certified Healthy Schools as part of the Certified Healthy Oklahoma program. Certified Healthy Oklahoma is a partnership between the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals, the Oklahoma Turning Point Council, the State Chamber and the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

Incentive grants for school districts are based on district enrollment and strategies and policies implemented. Grant funds may be used for projects that advance health.

Poteau Public Schools received \$10,000 to purchase fitness equipment. Antlers Public Schools received \$5,000 to purchase health education curriculum, physical education equipment and health training. Millwood Public Schools received \$5,000 for health education training, fitness equipment and the support of wellness coordinator. Afton Public Schools received \$3,000 to repair a greenhouse, purchase exercise equipment and purchase a refrigerator for its after-school program and backpack meals program. Pleasant Grove Public Schools received \$1,500 to purchase a health education curriculum and health assessment equipment.

The Healthy Schools Incentive Grant criteria focuses on schools strengthening local wellness policies to set goals for nutrition, physical activity and approving tobacco-free policies.

Tobacco-free policies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are a prerequisite for the grants. Other criteria include schools utilizing a school health assessment tool to identify strengths and weaknesses and develop action plans to improve health and safety for students and staff.

“We want to reward schools that are actively promoting a healthy lifestyle. Studies show that active, healthy kids perform better in school,” said TSET Executive Director Tracey Strader. “Habits formed early in life last a lifetime and we want to recognize schools that are making the healthy choice the easy choice for students, staff and the community.”

TSET was created by a constitutional amendment in 2000 as a long term strategy to improve health and ensure settlement payments from a 1998 multistate lawsuit against the tobacco industry. The funds are placed in an endowment to ensure a growing funding source for generations to come. Only the earnings from the endowment are used to fund grants and programs.