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Noble Public Schools given healthy business award

By Julianna Parker

Noble Public Schools received the 2008 Certificate of Excellence from the Certified Healthy Business Program, officials were notified last week.

"We're very proud of that," Superintendent Greg Kasbaum said. "... Few businesses have received this award." NPS is among 143 award winners around the state that were chosen by the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Oklahoma Academy, the State Chamber and the Oklahoma Turning Point Council. NPS is among 31 businesses selected this year to receive Certificates of Excellence. There were 83 Certificates of Merit awarded and 29 businesses received certificate awards.

The healthy business program was initiated in 2003 and so far, 497 certificates have been awarded to businesses certified statewide.

Of those businesses, none have been school districts, Kasbaum said.

The emphasis on health and wellness at NPS "definitely makes it an encouraging place to work," said Kendra Barnett, special education teacher at Noble Public Schools.

When Barnett read the e-mail Kasbaum sent NPS staff notifying them of the award, she said she felt "really proud."

"The district's been wonderful to work for," she said.

NPS will receive the award at an awards ceremony and luncheon Jan. 13, 2009, at the Pavilion at the Governor's Mansion.

The announcement came as part of this week's 11th annual Oklahoma Turning Point Council Forum held at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond.

The Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program recognizes Oklahoma businesses that provide health and wellness opportunities, and are working to improve the health status of Oklahomans. To be certified, businesses must meet specific criteria, including providing employee health screenings, workplace health and nutrition education, opportunities for physical exercise activities, management support for healthy workplace environments, tobacco use prevention activities and sharing wellness activities within their respective communities.

The Noble Wellness Subcommittee, led in part by Eva Dunn, Robin Stead and Gail Hilty, has worked over the past year to educate and provide healthy opportunities for employees at Noble Public Schools as well as the whole community.

Last spring, the subcommittee sent out a survey to the district's employees to evaluate employee wellness needs and education.

This fall, the school district has implemented several wellness initiatives.

Dunn prepared a handbook for employees that featured information about portion sizes, healthy eating tips, information on cholesterol and blood pressure, nutritional facts and tips on how to create rewards for students other than unhealthy food. The handbook was distributed to 350 Noble School employees this fall.

NPS also participated in three community health fairs, providing health screenings and tobacco cessation resources to more than 200 Noble community residents.

Other Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Awards of Excellence recipients in the area include: Norman Regional Health System, Cleveland County Health Department Norman and Moore, SYSCO Food Services of Oklahoma, Center for Children and Families and McClain County Health Department Purcell and Blanchard. To learn more about the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business program or to apply for certification, visit the Oklahoma Turning Point Council Web site at www.okturningpoint.org.
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