

The Pulse

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

Summer 2009



American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance



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websites:

www.aahperd.org/jointprojects
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A Fantastic Celebration of 30 Fabulous Years

By: *Caroline Taylor*

In case you haven't heard — the Jump Rope For Heart program turned 30 this year! From the start of the year — schools, states, and districts all celebrated this milestone with exciting events, parties, and contests. While all of this was going on, the folks at AAHPERD were cooking up something big for the grand finale celebration at the AAHPERD National Convention in Tampa, FL. Just a couple of months before convention began, we found the perfect spot to hold the event. It wasn't a ballroom at a hotel, or a meeting room at the convention center. It was Splitsville — a place where coordinators of all ages could have a good time, join together as a team, and talk a little smack as they competed against one another. The party at Splitsville was certainly one to be remembered as coordinators teamed up in bowling and billiards, enjoyed some dinner and drinks, and even broke out in to dance for more than a couple of songs. In the midst of the party, we also took time to honor the coordinators in attendance who had been involved with Jump for the last 30 years, JRFH and HFH award winners, and a special recognition of Bob Melson who has given so much to this program and will retire this year. The party was a hit with all the coordinators who could attend. ♥

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Joint Projects Office
AAHPERD
1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191
ctaylor@aaahperd.org
1-800-213-7193 ext. 429



At the Heart of the Matter

American Heart Association
Learn and Live...



Montana Teacher Selected Hoops Coordinator of the Year

Janet Erickson's heart is into both children and physical education, and she has brought the two together for a career teaching physical education at Helena Middle School, Helena, Montana. Erickson was named the national "Hoops For Heart" coordinator of year.

Erickson has organized the annual "Hoops For Heart" program at the school for the past 15 years.

Students ask friends and family for donations and receive thank-you gifts based on the dollars they raise. This educational program teaches physical fitness and promotes the value of community service to students and their families. It shows students that they can contribute to their community's welfare.

Erickson's leadership and local student effort has raised \$60,000 for the cause over the years.

"I'm motivated because we save lives — HMS saves lives," she said.

Erickson said young people are more than willing to participate because they all seem to know someone who has been affected by heart disease or stroke.

"Each kid has their own story," she said. "Everyone has been affected by heart disease or stroke — it's not just older people, it's children, too."

Ken Cloud, another physical education teacher at HMS, has worked with Erickson since 1988.

"When she wants to get something done — she does it — and well," he said. Cloud describes Erickson as a teacher who is "very fair, very firm and very friendly."

"She is 100 percent positive every day she walks in the door," he said. Eighth-grader Michaela Stewart has waited for two years to be in Erickson's gym class.

"When I first started (at HMS) I always wanted to be in her class, and now I am," Stewart said with teenage excitement. "You gotta like Ms. Erickson — she's Ms. Erickson. She's not like a normal teacher — she's fun."

HMS staff recently planned a surprise award ceremony for the unassuming Erickson.

"I was looking around the room full of people thinking 'What great person is going to get an award?'" she said.

Then they called her name. "I was so much in shock," Erickson said. "I was totally floored." ❤️



Jeanne Rucker – Physical Educator

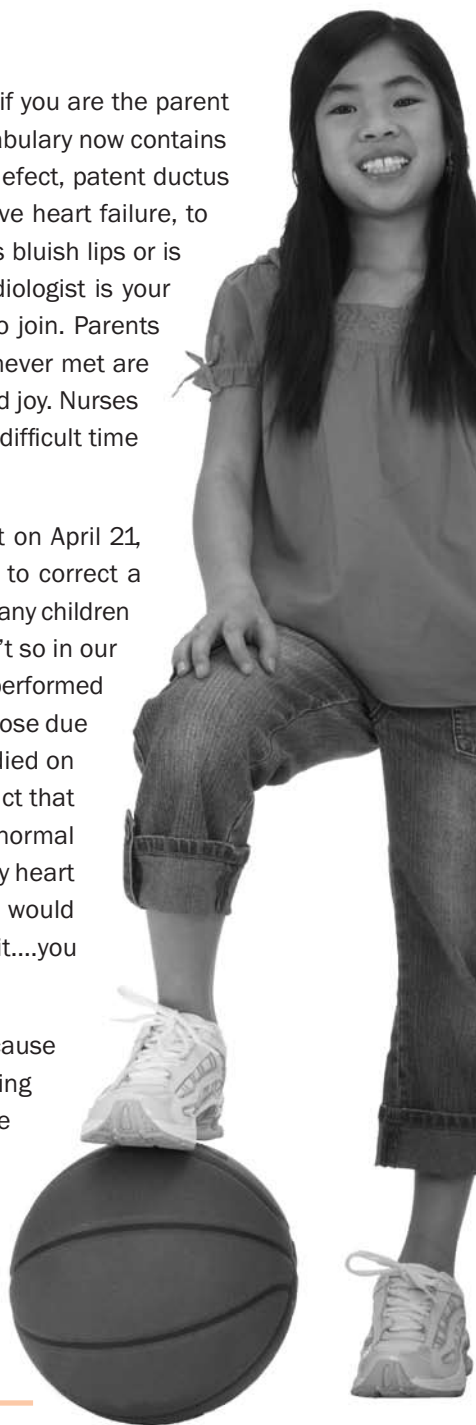
*Washington Elementary School
Hays, KS
JRFH/HFH Grant Recipient*

From a parent's perspective...

Hear disease takes on a completely different meaning if you are the parent of a child born with a congenital heart defect. Your vocabulary now contains words such as ventricular septal defect, atrial septal defect, patent ductus arteriosus, tetralogy of fallot, endocarditis, lasix, and congestive heart failure, to name a few. You are continually looking to see if your child has bluish lips or is “pinking” up after open heart surgery and your Pediatric Cardiologist is your new best friend. You have joined a “club” you never wanted to join. Parents who are going through the same ordeal and whom you have never met are now your support system. You share many tears of sadness and joy. Nurses who lovingly care for your child and support your family at this difficult time become lifelong friends.

Our daughter, Jamie, was born with a congenital heart defect on April 21, 1979. After many tests, a large VSD was diagnosed. Surgery to correct a ventricular septal defect is usually very successful and we saw many children have that particular surgery and leave the hospital. That wasn't so in our case. Jamie had two open heart surgeries. The second one was performed after it was discovered the patch that covered the hole came loose due to an infection. The surgery, in itself, was successful but she died on November 7, 1979. The cause of death was attributed to the fact that her heart muscle was about three times as thick as that of a normal infant so she was constantly in congestive heart failure. Her tiny heart could not sustain that load. The death of a child is something I would not want to have any parent experience. You never get over it....you just get through it and it changes your life forever.

Although our daughter died, the point we remember is that because of money collected by thousands of young people participating in JRFH/HFH, many children who were once thought to face death from congenital heart defects are now growing and thriving following surgery. The money raised has allowed researchers to come up with medical and surgical advances and techniques that not only save children but bring families great hope and joy as their child lives and grows to adulthood. This is every parent's dream. ♥



Winning the JRFH/HFH Grant

By: *Jim Brown*

Jump Rope for Heart has been a part of my life for many years. I first became involved as a student while attending Wayne State College (NE) and have never stopped. Each event that I have been a part of has had its rewards. Some of the events that have not raised a lot of money are the ones that I remember the most. My teaching career started at a country school which had an enrollment of about 20 children. Our event was held outside as we had no gym or even a room with a ceiling high enough to jump in. We had nearly 100% of the children take part along with many family members. It is an event that 28 years later seems like it was only yesterday we were gathering to conduct.

In 1996 I lost my father to heart disease. Ever since that time the events have taken on new meaning. I am now able to relate from personal experience how heart disease can affect you. I now have more passion when I conduct my events.

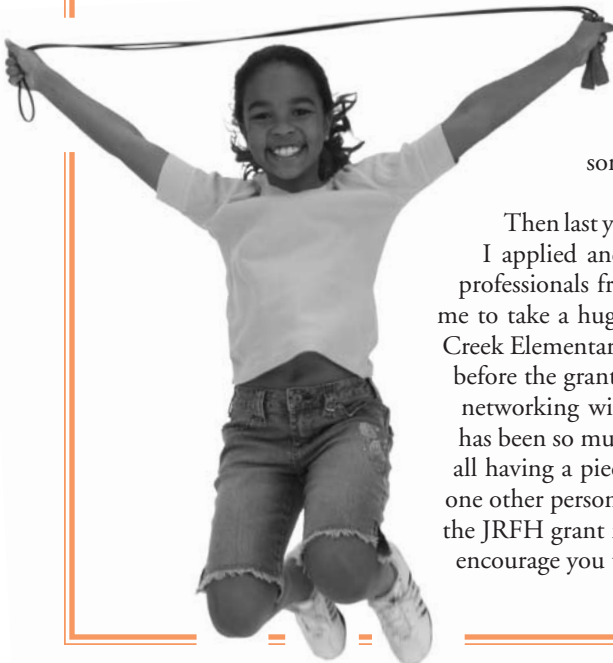
Each year before we start our event we take a moment to remember our loved ones and friends who have had a heart attack or stroke. I find that the kids really do get it and they truly do want to help put an end to the suffering people endure at their expense. Prior to our event two years ago a young man came to me with tears in his eyes explaining that his Grandpa had died from a heart attack and he missed him a lot. I told him that when he jumped I wanted him to remember his Grandpa and that the money he was raising just might help somebody else's Grandpa as doctors and scientists are going to use that money to try and find a way to help people not have heart attacks. I noticed as he was jumping the smile on his face never left.

Education is such a valuable tool and teaching children about heart disease and what they can do to help prevent it is something that I enjoy doing very much. We need to do whatever we can to get children active. No longer can we just talk the talk but we must walk it as well. There are so many forces working against

us. The rampant availability of junk food, video games, hundreds of television channels to choose from among others. Being aware that no child is ever left in line and that they are active to the highest degree possible is so important. I knew this to be the case but often due to a lack of equipment I was forced to do centers or have children share equipment in small groups instead of having some of their own.

Then last year I learned about the Jump Rope For Heart Grant program.

I applied and was honored to have been chosen along with 14 other professionals from across the country to receive it. The grant has allowed me to take a huge step forward in my quest to better my program at Slate Creek Elementary. I have been able to purchase much of the equipment that before the grant I only dreamed of. I also picked up many new ideas while networking with professionals who I met at the national convention. It has been so much fun this year being able to do activities with the children all having a piece of equipment or at least having one they can share with one other person and not a group as in the past. The application process for the JRFH grant is very simple. If you have not considered applying I would encourage you to do so. ♥





2008 JRFH/HFH Grant Recipient

By: *Randy Sparks*

As a recipient of the 2008 JRFH/HFH grant I want to say thank you to everyone who plays a role in JRFH/HFH. In my four years of teaching, the JRFH/HFH programs have helped me rebuild our physical education program. Out of all the programs available to physical educators JRFH/HFH has to be one of the best; the program offers valuable information about heart disease and helps raise money for research and schools.

The 2008 JRFH/HFH grant consisted of a \$1,200 gift certificate to US Games and a trip to the AAHPERD National Convention and Exposition in Ft. Worth, Texas. The grant helped our school purchase equipment to start an after school track club. Equipment purchased included; mini hurdles, speed ladders, cones, stop watches, agility dots, exercise bands, pennies, and a medical kit. This program was offered after school, two days a week for one hour, over a six week period. To conclude the program the students participated in a mini track meet. The program was open to all third through fifth grade students and over fifty students participated. The goals for the program included; increasing awareness for track and field, understanding the benefits of track and field, and increasing overall fitness levels.

The after school track club was a huge success and will be implemented again in the following years. The club was possible because of the help and support from AAHPERD and JRFH/HFH. Any physical educator that is currently not participating in the JRFH/HFH programs is missing out on a valuable resource. ♥





“The grant helped our school purchase equipment to start an after school track club... mini hurdles, speed ladders, cones, stop watches, agility dots, exercise bands, pennies, and a medical kit.”



The page is decorated with numerous orange and grey stars of various sizes scattered across the background. On the left and right sides, there are illustrations of balloons: two orange balloons and one grey balloon on the left, and one grey balloon and one orange balloon on the right. The main title is written in a large, bold, orange font.

Our Wisconsin JRFH Rockin' Celebration!

*By: Brenda Erdman
Westside Elementary PE Teacher, Reedsburg, WI
WAHPERD President-Elect*

What's so great about the 30th anniversary of JRFH? EVERYTHING, that's what! The loud music, the prizes, the teams, the healthy snacks, the atmosphere, and the goofy pictures. At Westside Elementary School in Reedsburg, Wisconsin JRFH is an all day celebration, and the 30th anniversary gave everyone a few more reasons to have even more fun! Our event is held in two parts, half of the school in the morning and the other half of the school in the afternoon. Each event has teams jumping continuously the whole time with special celebrations going on throughout the event. We jumped in honor of Mr. Seering, our local newspaper editor and in honor of two 5th graders, Logan and Caleb.

Bailey and Josh showed us how they like to stay in shape with a karate demonstration. Bailey asked me ahead of time if she could teach everyone some simple karate moves. Absolutely! What great enthusiasm, Bailey! In PE class my 5th graders are required to write and perform a jump rope routine. Ryan and Logan performed their routine in class and then came to me later to ask if they could perform it for both JRFH events. YES! Perfect unison, rump jump included and rope never stopping — way to go, boys!

Not only was jumping going on, but teams had a chance to traverse the bouldering wall and dance some DDR. Students also loved the chance to win prizes, and everyone received a certificate to Subway. The disco ball, and balloons all over the gym, really created a festive environment. Students especially loved the traveling cart with cut up apples and oranges. Our PTO generously supplies the fruit along with a great group of parent volunteers. My Westside parents help JRFH run so smoothly!

We may not be the top fundraising school, but our students do a wonderful job of collecting pledges and supporting the American Heart Association. It brings tears to my eyes to hear a mom tell me their son took \$5 out of his piggy bank, or a student giving a dollar knowing it won't be enough for a prize, but the student telling me, "that's okay, it's for a good cause." These students represent the real heart in JRFH. My top fundraising classroom receives the JRFH "traveling trophy" for the year, and each classroom is awarded a certificate based on the level (Gold, Silver, or Bronze) they reached for fundraising. The top classroom also wins a 30-minute lesson with the principal, while the teacher gets to take a break!

And what's in it for me? Wow, my heart is bursting at the end of the day. I receive a really great day with over 250 students smiling and sweating! Among the hustle and bustle of the event I have to remind myself to take a moment and just stop. Stop and look around at the wonderful help, the excitement on the students' faces, and watch the great jump rope skills we worked so hard on in class. I am not tired after this event, I am energized! The first thing I do once the students are tucked away in their classrooms and the gym is cleaned up is take out a pen and write down what went well and what I want to do next year, because the ideas are already flowing.

Thank you, Milwaukee WI., for starting a "rope-a-thon" 30 years ago. Westside looks forward to carrying on the JRFH tradition for 30 or more years to come! ♥