

NEWS RELEASE

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THE COOPER INSTITUTE DONATES FITNESSGRAM TO 40+ DIVERSE PRIVATE SCHOOLS & PROGRAMS NOT COVERED UNDER TEXAS LEGISLATION

DISD & HPISD Schools Also Receive Funding for New Statewide Physical Fitness Testing Program

Jackie Joyner-Kersey Encourages Dallas Kids to Achieve the “Healthy Fitness Zone” to Help Scale-Down Childhood Obesity

DALLAS (February 20, 2008) – Thousands of students at more than 40 Dallas-area private schools and after-school programs in diverse and low-income neighborhoods will now benefit from the same FITNESSGRAM® assessment testing that will be implemented in public schools statewide this year. The Cooper Institute and its Our Kids' Health initiative, along with event speaker and Olympic gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey, announced the donation today at St. Philip's School and Community Center—one of the private schools benefiting from the donation—and later at a benefit luncheon at the Hilton Anatole Hotel.

“As a supporter of physical fitness, I am proud to be a part of announcing the great news of the FITNESSGRAM donation for students of St. Philip's and the other benefiting Dallas-area schools,” said Joyner-Kersey, who cheered as students participated in three of its tests at today's event. “Childhood obesity is a serious concern in Texas and across the nation, as kids today are often raised on too much fast-food and video games. FITNESSGRAM will help scale-down the problem by encouraging schools, families and entire communities to set healthy standards for kids, while measuring their success along the way.”

The Cooper Institute and local benefactors are also donating the program to the Dallas Independent School District's 225 schools and the Highland Park Independent School District's seven schools.

“Providing ways for kids to stay active is an important part of keeping them physically fit and preventing childhood obesity, as well as bettering their school performance. Research shows that students achieving a Healthy Fitness Zone in at least five out of six FITNESSGRAM tests also score higher academically and have fewer discipline problems,” explained Dr. Kenneth Cooper, chairman & CEO, Cooper Aerobics Center and founder, The Cooper Institute, who has raised \$2 million to fund the program in schools statewide. “Thanks to the commitment of our supporters, we are now able to bring this scientifically-sound program to even more students in our community.”

FITNESSGRAM, created by The Cooper Institute, was selected last year by the Texas Education Association (TEA) as the statewide physical fitness assessment tool. Senate Bill 530 requires that more than four million public school students, grades 3 through 12, be tested by the FITNESSGRAM on their physical fitness annually. In fact, more than 8,000 public schools are preparing for the first test this spring; however, there is no provision for private schools. SB 530 also mandates physical education for K-5th graders this school year and 6th-8th graders next school year.

Texas ranks 12th among all states for obese and overweight populations. A 2007 Texas Comptroller report showed that nearly two-thirds of the state's adults are overweight or obese. It also showed that 42 percent of the state's 4th graders, 39 percent of 8th graders and 36 percent of 11th graders were overweight or at risk of being overweight.

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“Physical activity is an emphasis for our program at St. Philips, just as we strive for excellence in academics,” said Terry Flowers, Ph.D., head master and executive director, St. Philip’s School & Community Center. “We are grateful for this generous FITNESSGRAM donation, which will allow us to better track the progress of our students going forward. I know it will be an invaluable tool for other inner-city schools.”

A total of 43 underserved private and faith-based schools and programs in east, west and south Dallas will receive the FITNESSGRAM this spring and implement the program during the 2008-2009 school year. The schools receiving the donation are: A.W. Brown Fellowship Charter School; Bishop Dunne Catholic School; Clay Academy; Dallas Christian School; East Dallas Community School; Fellowship Christian Academy; Good Shepherd Catholic School; Hampton Preparatory School; The Highlands School; Holy Family of Nazareth School; Holy Trinity Catholic School; IBOC Christian Academy; Immaculate Conception School; J. Erik Jonsson Community School; James L. Collins Catholic School; The Kessler School; Life School; Lighthouse Christian Academy; Lindsley Park Community School; Mesorah High School; Mount St. Michael Catholic School; North Hills Preparatory School; Oak Hill Academy; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School; Peak Preparatory School; St. Anthony Academy; St. Augustine Catholic School; St. Bernard of Clairvaux School; St. Elizabeth Catholic School; St. John Catholic School; St. Mark Catholic School; St. Mary of Carmel School; St. Philip’s School and Community Center; St. Thomas Aquinas School; Summit International Preparatory School; Trinity Christian School; Tyler Street Christian Academy; West Dallas Community School; Williams Preparatory School.

The after-school programs receiving the FITNESSGRAM donations are: Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas; Boys & Girls Clubs of Ft. Worth; Girls Incorporated of Greater Dallas; Heart House Dallas; and The YWCA of Greater Dallas.

Major sponsors of The Cooper Institute’s “A Life Rx for Health” luncheon, in which Joyner-Kersee served as the keynote speaker, include Olympic-level sponsor Michael Driscoll, which will fund a five-year research study of the FITNESSGRAM data from the 40+ private schools. Additional sponsors include Olympic-level sponsor Wellstone Communities; Decathlon-level sponsor Vought Aircraft Industries, Inc.; and Marathon-level sponsors Michael and Susan Dell, and Esther Beth and Orville Rogers; as well as more than 150 individual and corporate donors.

About FITNESSGRAM

FITNESSGRAM measures aerobic capacity, body composition, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility. Students do not “pass” or “fail” tests or are compared against each other; rather the student’s performance is individually evaluated against standards for a healthy level of fitness based on gender and age. The goal is for all students to achieve a Healthy Fitness Zone for each test. Each student’s results are compiled in a report, which are made available to parents by request.

The results of the FITNESSGRAM testing period this spring will provide baseline data, and students will be tested annually to track their progress. The TEA will compare the results against existing data on students’ academic achievement levels, attendance levels, obesity levels, disciplinary problems and meal programs. The overall results will be made available to the public and the Texas Legislature each year.

About The Cooper Institute

Founded by Dr. Kenneth Cooper, the Our Kids’ Health initiative led by The Cooper Institute, a 501(c)3 research and education nonprofit located at Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas, seeks to improve children’s health by reducing childhood obesity. In 1982, The Cooper Institute created and still maintains the FITNESSGRAM testing tool, which is used in more than 65,000 schools nationwide. The Cooper Institute also conducts research on preventive medicine and related health issues, which are often cited and has affected public health policy, and educates and certifies health and fitness professionals by offering courses, books and DVDs. For more information, visit www.ourkidshealth.org or www.cooperinstitute.org. ###