



SURGEON GENERAL, STATE OF ARKANSAS

JOSEPH W. THOMPSON, MD, MPH

NEWS RELEASE

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April 26, 2011

ARKANSAS TOBACCO EXCISE TAX PROVIDES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES IN SPRINGDALE

Arkansas is the first state in the country to fund a joint use agreement program between schools and communities.

SPRINGDALE, Ark. — The Springdale school district has created new paved trails on the grounds of nine schools by taking advantage of a statewide grant opportunity resulting from the Arkansas Tobacco Excise Tax enacted in 2009. The trails are available to the community and are the centerpiece of \$70,000 in joint use agreement grants awarded to Springdale by the Arkansas Department of Education.

According to Arkansas Surgeon General, Joseph W. Thompson, M.D., M.P.H., Arkansas is the first state in the nation to provide state funding for joint use agreements (JUAs) to expand safe opportunities for physical activity and to make school facilities available for public use during non-school hours when they would otherwise go unused.

Dr. Thompson said, "We've moved from awareness of the obesity epidemic to action being taken throughout the state to create communities where people have access to healthy foods and safe places to be physically active, and where the healthy choice is the easy choice. Finding support for more places to enable people to walk, run, bike and play safely is one of many examples of Arkansas's leadership in the national movement to reverse the obesity epidemic."

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The JUA grant is a competitive application process through which approximately \$350,000.00 has been awarded to collaborative partnerships between communities and schools to fund 28 JUA projects to date. The Arkansas Department of Education administers the program. The next application process will begin in early July 2011.

"Joint use agreements are a great way for the state, local communities, and schools to work together," said Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell. "We're hopeful this will lead to improved health in our state and stimulate community involvement in schools. We encourage districts across Arkansas to apply."

A grand opening celebration for the Springdale joint use agreement trails was held today at John Tyson Elementary School, with representatives from the Springdale chamber of commerce on-hand to perform a ribbon-cutting ceremony. In addition to Dr. Thompson and Dr. Kimbrell, the program included Dr. Jim Rollins, Springdale school district superintendent and Dr. Paul Calleja, the parent of a John Tyson Elementary student.

During his remarks, Dr. Thompson issued a challenge to Arkansans to make our state the first in the nation to reverse the obesity epidemic that is taking its toll on health and productivity throughout the country and encouraged people to get involved. He offered three things that people can do:

- Parents can visit their kid's school and eat in the cafeteria at least twice each school year and support positive changes to provide healthy foods in the school.
- People from all sectors of society can talk directly to community leaders about the importance of creating healthy communities. By changing our environment so we have access to healthy foods and physical activity, we improve the opportunity for our communities to become more vibrant, healthy and productive.
- Community leaders should invite others in their community to talk about the issues that impact health and how they can create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice. This includes safety, access to parks and recreational facilities, fresh and nutritious foods being available locally, sidewalks in neighborhoods, and transportation.

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The nine Springdale schools with new trails are:

1. Early Childhood Center, 409 North Thompson Street
2. Bayyari Elementary, 2199 Scottsdale Street
3. Elmdale Elementary, 420 North West End Avenue
4. George Elementary, 2878 South Powell Street
5. John Tyson Elementary, 1967 Chapman Avenue
6. Jones Elementary, 900 South Powell Street
7. Parson Hills Elementary, 2326 Cardinal Drive
8. Thurman G. Smith Elementary, 3600 Falcon Road
9. Walker Elementary, 1701 South 40th Street

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