



SURGEON GENERAL, STATE OF ARKANSAS

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NEWS RELEASE

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ARKANSAS TOBACCO EXCISE TAX PROVIDES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES IN CABOT

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

Cabot, Ark. — Thanks to Arkansas's Joint Use Agreement (JUA) grant program, the majority of school gymnasiums in the Cabot School District are now available for Cabot Parks and Recreation events. In return, the Cabot Parks and Recreation-operated swimming pool and soccer fields are being used by school district athletic teams. The JUA grant program was made possible as a result of the Arkansas Tobacco Excise Tax enacted in 2009.

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 a JUA program 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."

(MORE)

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."

Dr. Thompson and Dr. Kimbrell participated in a celebration of the Cabot School District joint use agreement with Cabot Parks and Recreation held today at the Veteran's Park Community Center. They were joined by Mayor Bill Cypert, Cabot School District Superintendent, Dr. Tony Thurman and Cabot School District Health and Wellness Coordinator, Kelly Spencer. A Cabot school swim team and a wrestling team provided demonstrations.

Cabot School District Joint Use Agreement

The JUA grant enables the Cabot School District and Cabot Parks and Recreation to collaborate in promotion and enhancement of community health by sharing resources, lowering costs and educating young people and their families. Also a partner in the Cabot joint use agreement is the local First Baptist Church to help support and build capacity for an "Upward" basketball program. Cabot School District gymnasiums are made accessible for Cabot Parks and Recreation events and "Upward" basketball program and the Veteran's Community Center has been made available to school district athletic teams. This collaborative effort allows affordable opportunities for children and their families to participate in regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity through sports. The Cabot School District will utilize the opportunity provided by the JUA grant to educate community members on strategies to live a healthier life.

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