



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

September 29, 2009

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HEALTHY STUDENTS MAKE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

HealthLink North County: A Decade of Partnership Promoting School Health

A family of four at an Escondido preschool needs health insurance. A child at an Oceanside elementary school needs glasses, but has no resources. A student in San Marcos has advanced dental disease, but no dental coverage. With fewer school nurses, larger school populations and increased complexity in health issues, schools and districts need all the support they can get to ensure their students are healthy and ready to learn.

HealthLink North County, a school-health collaborative, addresses issues like those noted above. At a recognition event held today in San Marcos, the 10-year accomplishments of the HealthLink partnership between the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) and community-based organizations, health and dental care providers, regional collaboratives and local school districts were celebrated.

"North County students' health and well-being are a priority. This collaboration embodies the commitment that the County and its community partners have made," said County Supervisor Bill Horn, whose fifth district covers much of North County. "We look toward the future of this important partnership with a common vision: healthy children make better students and better students make healthier communities."

"By working together with our community and school partners, HealthLink continues to make a difference in the lives of children and their families," added HHS Deputy Director Donna Hand. "The goal is to improve health and education outcomes for North County school-aged children."

Over the decade HealthLink North County has grown into an award-winning program for such notable accomplishments as: hosting the 2005 *School Food* and 2006 *School Fitness Summits* where hundreds of people came together for the first time in San Diego County to implement school based strategies for healthier campuses; partnering with the North County Dental Task Force to promote free dental screenings that have reached over 1,500 North County children; developing "Nutrition to Grow On" garden toolkits for all 22 North County elementary school districts; supporting the school-based diabetes screening efforts in both the North Inland and North Coastal Regions and assisting in the planning of the countywide *Childhood Obesity Summit*.

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