

HEALTH & WELL-BEING @ Issue

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Healthy Moves

Changing behaviors for healthier futures

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The Rapides Foundation
**GET HEALTHY CENLA
VIDEO CHALLENGE**

Grace Christian School captures first place in Video Challenge. PAGE 4



Changing behaviors



Above: Young students enjoy healthy snacks at Plaquemine Elementary.

Right: Fresh vegetables like these green beans are offered for sale at the Cane River Green Market in Natchitoches.



for healthier futures

Central Louisiana school students are taking innovative PE classes and have healthier food choices in their cafeterias. Farmers markets are springing up in communities across the region, and towns are holding events to urge families to get more active. Young people across Cenla are pledging to be tobacco-free, and tobacco users are getting help to kick their habit for good.

These are just some of the results of The Rapides Foundation's four-year-old initiative on healthy behaviors.

It all started when The Rapides Foundation's board of trustees began exploring the need for a focus on healthy behaviors. The landmark 1993 paper titled "Actual Causes of Death in the United States" by William Foege and J. Michael McGinnis held that the top three health-risk behaviors resulting in productive years of life lost are tobacco use, sedentary lifestyle and nutrition.

What resulted was a new campaign called Get Healthy Cenla, which urged residents to get moving, eat healthy and quit using tobacco. The Foundation has awarded grants to schools and communities throughout Central Louisiana designed to do just that.



*Dr. Bruce Barton,
Chairman of the
Foundation's
Board of Trustees.*

Dr. Bruce Barton, a family physician and chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, said he sees too many patients with advanced diseases. That's why the initiative is so critical – because it supports programs in schools and communities. People can make better choices to become more active and eat healthier, with the goal of preventing many debilitating diseases.

"If I see somebody for a wellness exam, we go back and look at ... what can you do to prevent the diabetes that your mother had, the high blood pressure and heart disease that your dad had? The earlier we catch people, the earlier we can intervene." Barton believes it's critical to target young people to ensure healthier futures.

"The Foundation initiatives in schools are vital, and that's where we'll really see a change in behavior," he said. "If we can reinforce that in physicians' offices with parents and grandparents, and the kids are getting the same message in school, then maybe that will have more of an impact in communities."



Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation, agreed, and explained that is one of the reasons why the initiative is working in the school districts served by the Foundation. "We've really focused on the schools because that is where the kids are," he said. "We want them to grow up knowing a better way of eating and being more active."

Behavior change cannot happen overnight, but is possible with a long-term, disciplined approach to change behaviors that are rooted in our culture and hindered by convenience and our busy lifestyles. "Can it happen? Absolutely. It can and must be done to preserve the quality of life for this and future generations in Central Louisiana," Rosier said.



High schools create videos on healthy eating, physical activity



The Grace Christian School Video Challenge cast and crew are shown with the first-place check for \$10,000.

Grace Christian School's 30-second video "Be Strange, Eat Healthy: the New Normal" won first place before a panel of expert judges in the Get Healthy Cenla Video Challenge, earning the school a \$10,000 grand prize. The Rapides Foundation is now working with the school's team to reproduce the video for use in the Foundation's Diet and Physical Activity Initiative's marketing campaign this fall.

In February the Foundation issued a challenge to every high school in Central Louisiana: produce a 30-second video about healthy eating and exercise. Thirty-nine schools accepted the challenge, starting out by researching nutrition and physical activity trends in Central Louisiana. Then, the creative work began.

"We were proud that 39 of public and private high schools in Central Louisiana chose to participate, and we were very pleased with the results," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. Rosier explained the intent of the contest was to get high school students to learn about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity in a fun way. It underscored the Foundation's belief that behavior change begins with young people.



Above: The top 10 teams gather on stage for the winning video announcement.

The Rapides Foundation GET HEALTHY CENLA VIDEO CHALLENGE

Schools used creative and innovative ways to make their point – all in a 30-second time span. The list was narrowed to the top 10 using two methods: online voting to send three videos to the finals; and a team of expert judges to select the remaining seven.

During the online voting period, the Foundation website had more than 44,500 visits from every state except Maine, and from 46 countries. The videos were viewed more than 49,000 times, with 17,242 votes being cast.

At the grand finale hosted by celebrity Faith Ford, the top 10 teams presented their concepts before a panel of judges. Avoyelles High School's "Eat Right" concept won second place and the \$5,000 prize. LaSalle High School's "Get Healthy Man" video won third for \$2,500. The other top finalists were Bolton High, Elizabeth High, Glenmora High, Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, Plainview High, Tioga High and Winnfield Senior High schools.

Grace Christian approached the challenge by letting students suggest concepts for the video, said Ritchey Cable, a teacher and film club faculty sponsor. Twelve

ideas were submitted, with four students coming up with the scene of the 1950s family sitting down to a meal of candy and other unhealthy foods. The video concept took off from there, with a core group of seniors flushing out the scenes and coming up with the overall concept. In all, some 37 students participated in the project, and the scenes were shot with a Canon T2i SLR camera, which has an advanced HD Movie mode that shoots full high-definition movies.

The video project had another effect: students became aware of the importance of making healthy choices, Cable said. In fact, by the end of the school year, bottled water, pretzels, multi-grain muffins and other healthy snacks were outselling the unhealthy choices in the school's canteen. One parent even joked that her child had come home from school asking for apples and other healthy snacks.

Cable said the whole school took ownership in the project, especially during the two-week online voting period. "We were proud of the students for working so hard to get their friends and family to vote." At the finale, students were nervous and excited, and shocked when the results were revealed. "It was very fulfilling."



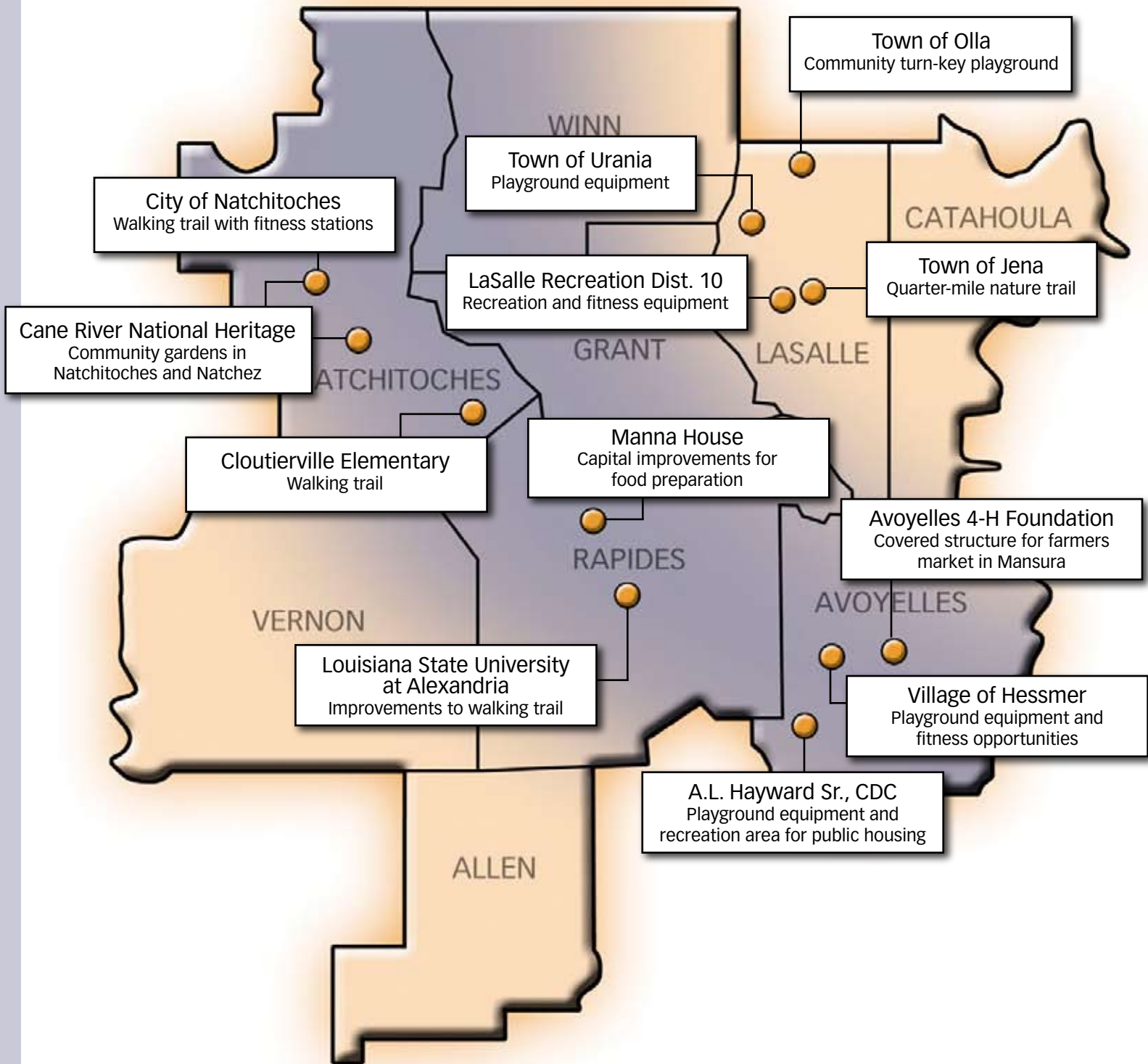
Avoyelles High School students pose with their second-place check.



LaSalle High School students take home the third-place prize.

Spreading the health

“Because of the success and interest in this grant opportunity, we recommended more than four awards,” said Annette Beuchler, Director of Programs and Communications. In all, 12 projects out of 32 submissions were approved.



COMMUNITY PROJECTS encourage active, healthy lifestyles



Earlier this year, The Rapides Foundation asked Central Louisiana nonprofits, government entities, faith-based community groups and community coalitions to submit proposals for projects that would encourage and improve physical activity and healthy eating in their communities. The response was so overwhelming and the proposals so impressive that the Foundation's board of trustees voted to increase the number of grants it planned to award.

"Because of the success and interest in this grant opportunity, we recommended more than four awards," said Annette Beuchler, Director of Programs and Communications. "The Foundation applauds Cenla's determination to get healthy. We were encouraged by the interest, and we look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition." In all, 12 projects out of 32 submissions were approved.

One of the 12 organizations, Manna House in Alexandria, serves free, hot lunches to anyone who comes through its serving line. For some, it's the only hot meal they may receive in a day. One problem was that Manna House did not have adequate

storage for donated produce, so providing fresh fruits, vegetables and meats on a daily basis was a challenge. "We would have to turn away produce if we couldn't use it right away," said Executive Director Leland McCullough. Manna House will use its grant money to purchase a walk-in cooler and an institutional triple sink that will allow volunteers to store, properly wash and ultimately serve fresh fruits and vegetables to their customers.

"Y'all have no idea how much this was needed. What you're doing is helping us to put good food in the hands of people who need it," he said.

The grants are part of the Diet and Physical Activity Initiative's focus on communities, which compliments work being done in Central Louisiana schools. "Research tells us that a poor diet and sedentary lifestyle are great contributors to poor health, premature mortality and morbidity," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "Our grants are designed to increase healthy eating and active lifestyles. This ties in to our mission, which is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana."

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Left: Debbie Douget shops for fresh vegetables at the Cane River Green Market

Focus on the schools:



Teaching children 'a better way of eating and being more active'

Supporting evidence-based physical fitness and healthy eating programs in schools is a major focus of the Foundation's Diet and Physical Activity Initiative. With grants to school districts throughout Central Louisiana, The Rapides Foundation realizes the importance of reaching out to children.

"Children are the most critical population, so we believe that schools are our best partners and best venues," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "We want to provide the schools with additional resources to be more effective in the efforts they are already implementing."

In 2010, 84 K-8 schools in Central Louisiana school districts continued their work to promote healthy eating and physical activity through a multi-year grant from The Rapides Foundation. Building on work that began in 2009 with planning grants, the schools implemented programs designed to teach students about a healthy lifestyle as well as to increase access to both healthy eating and physical activity.

One proven way to get children moving is through innovative PE classes that are geared toward all students, not just the ones with athletic abilities. Two such programs are being used in Central Louisiana schools. They are CATCH, (the Coordinated Approach to Child Health), and SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids.)



"The goal of the CATCH program is to get the kids to moderate or vigorous physical activity several times a week for at least 50 percent of the PE time, but in fun ways, not just the traditional games that you would see in a traditional PE classroom," Plaquemine Elementary Principal Jennifer Dismar said. She noted the importance of reaching those children who may be intimidated by traditional sports. "It's still very important that they remain active, and most kids exposed to a variety of resources will find something that they like doing."

Oakdale Elementary PE teacher Jamie Whitley said the SPARK program gets students active, but also involves other subjects like mathematics, science, and reading. "It'll incorporate throw your scarf up and count how many times you can clap your hands before you catch the scarf again," Whitley said.

Above: Students from Plaquemine Elementary take part in CATCH program exercises.

Left: Plaquemine Elementary students enjoy a healthy snack.

PE teacher Callie McDaniel further explained: "They come in and start exercising and they're doing so much and using so many different muscles and learning so much that they don't realize they're getting as fit as they are with everything they're doing."

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Students at Oakdale Elementary enjoy SPARK program exercises.

Focus on the Schools

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To create healthier environments, Central Louisiana schools are also offering better choices in cafeterias and canteens. At Plaucheville Elementary, for example, fresh fruits and vegetables are delivered three times a week and serve as afternoon snacks for the students.

“The goal is to expose them to almost every fruit and vegetable, and hopefully to develop their tastes to a variety of things,” Dismar said. “They really enjoy having those snacks.”

In April and again in September, numerous schools held Turnoff Week events designed to encourage families to step away from TV and computer screens and get active. Events included community walking groups on school tracks and Family Nights with recreational and healthy eating activities.



Community Projects

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In 2010, the Foundation also awarded 10 Diet and Physical Activity community grants throughout Central Louisiana, resulting in farmers markets, home gardening projects, family bicycling events and other activities that got residents moving and making healthier food choices.

The City of Natchitoches expanded its Cane River Green Market and created the “Eat Healthy Natchitoches” campaign, offering vouchers to people who might not have opportunities to purchase fresh produce. Customers who are eligible for the vouchers can turn them over to market vendors for free fruits and vegetables.

Courtney Hornsby, Director of Programming and Promotions for the City of Natchitoches, said the program expands opportunities for children. “They play a game with some of the groups called farmers market bingo. Some children have never even seen an avocado or a mango or a pomegranate or any other type of fruit or vegetable, and we allow them to taste it, and see it, and touch it, and learn it about its value.”

Farmers markets have multiple purposes. They can change the “culture of eating” by introducing people to different types of healthy foods. They also have an economic impact by giving local residents a place to sell their produce.



Above: Eugene Leeper of Winnfield sells a variety of fresh vegetables at the Cane River Green Market.

CATCH®

CATCH is an evidence-based, coordinated school health program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices, and prevent tobacco use in children from preschool through grade 8. The program is currently being implemented in over 7,500 schools and after-school programs across the United States and Canada.

SPARK™

SPARK is a research-based organization dedicated to creating, implementing, and evaluating programs that promote lifelong wellness. SPARK strives to improve the health of children and adolescents by disseminating evidence-based physical activity and nutrition programs that provide curriculum, staff development, follow-up support and equipment to teachers of Pre-K through 12th grade students.



Students from a AMIkids take their message to the streets as part of Kick Butts Day 2011.

Tobacco Initiative enters fifth year

This summer, The Rapides Foundation begins the fifth year of its Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative. As in previous years, grants have been awarded to junior high and high schools throughout the Foundation service area with the goal of preventing young people from starting the use of tobacco and assisting current tobacco users in their efforts to quit.

Activities of the School Partnership Grants, this year, include a regional summit for youth, Tar Wars and Kick Butts Day Activities. The Youth Summit will challenge young people to critically assess tobacco industry behavior in their own communities. Educational topics will range from youth access to tobacco to strategies used by "Big Tobacco" to target teens and young adults and how to counter these tactics.

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Tar Wars, a peer-to-peer activity, will continue to be led by the Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center (CLAHEC), through a Community Partnership Grant. Youth leaders from participating high schools are trained to educate elementary-age youth about the ill-effects of tobacco and tobacco prevention. Kick Butts Day is a nationally celebrated event, and participating schools are provided the resources to plan and organize their own all-day event.

Community Partnership Grants are awarded to CLAHEC and the Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center (SWLAHEC) in the Foundation's effort to educate and assist the adult population in tobacco prevention and control. Both AHECs work with local employers to implement policy for a tobacco-free workplace and partner with local businesses to conduct Great American Smokeout activities. Additionally, SWLAHEC continues to do coalition work in Allen Parish.



Students from local high schools wore T-shirts and created displays to drive home creative messages during Kick Butts Day.

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The Rapides Foundation continues a legacy of community healthcare initiated in 1903.

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