

The *be well* Health and Wellness Initiative Recognizes Healthy School Champions

DENVER, Colo. (April 11, 2018) – Four schools that participate in the *be well* Youth Program, part of the *be well* Health and Wellness Initiative of The Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities, have been named a 2018 Healthy School Champion. This year's honorees include Denver School of the Arts (\$300 Promising School Award), Ashley Elementary School (\$500 Excellence Award), New Legacy Charter School (\$500 Excellence Award), and North Middle School (\$1,000 Bronze Award).

"It's a great honor to have them receive this recognition," said Emily Shore, director of Healthy Schools for The Foundation for Sustainable Urban Communities. Shore pointed out that this is the second consecutive year that four *be well* Youth Program schools have earned the Healthy School Champion designation.

be well is a grassroots movement of communities coming together to take charge of their health and wellness. *be well* Youth engages kids, schools and communities in creating and promoting fun activities, events and advocacy projects to encourage healthy living among children and their families.

Each year, Shore presents information to *be well* Youth Program schools about the Healthy Champions initiative and helps prepare applications. To be considered for the honor, a school must complete Smart Source, Colorado's school health inventory that enables K-12 public schools to assess their health policies and practices to help ensure students are healthy and ready to learn; complete an application that includes information about efforts and progress achieved in both the previous and current years; and submit three letters of support from educators, parents, community leaders or students. A 30-person review committee scores the schools' applications, with the highest marks earning the sought-after designation.

Sponsored by the Colorado Health Foundation, the Healthy School Champion awards are presented by the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) and Colorado's Healthy Schools Successful Students. The wellness team at each winning school determines how it will use the award money to further health efforts and receives a large banner proclaiming the institution is a 2018 Healthy School Champion. All winners are also highlighted in the Colorado Healthy School Champions annual magazine.

Additionally, representatives from each of the 47 honored schools will be recognized at the Champions Breakfast during the 2018 Healthy Schools Leadership Retreat: *Growing Together, Stronger than Ever – Sustaining the Whole Child* scheduled for June 7-8 at the Keystone (Colo.) Conference Center. Attendees will include the Colorado Commissioner of Education Katy Anthes and Lieutenant Governor Donna Lynne.

According to the CEI, this year's awards were the most competitive to date, with interest from 102 schools/districts. Only 47 applicants scored high enough to be honored for creating and supporting a healthy school environment and successfully implementing effective school health efforts that support student learning. Over the past eight years, more than 315 awards and more than \$350,000 in grants have been presented.

“This is a meaningful process to go through,” Shore stated. “All too often, schools, teachers and parents put in a lot of labor and time to make sure they have a healthy school, but they don’t get public recognition. They are doing the work but aren’t recognized as much as they should be.”

Shore pointed out that K-12 schools benefit through the statewide program by learning from each other and sharing best practices at age-appropriate levels that impact students and their families.

“Lessons integrated into the classroom are transferred home,” she said, adding, “Teaching and instilling health habits crosses over from generation to generation.”

The Colorado Health Foundation works to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation by ensuring that all Colorado children are fit and healthy, and that all Coloradans achieve stable, affordable and adequate health coverage to improve their health with support from a network of primary health care and community services. The Colorado Education Initiative is a statewide nonprofit organization that invests time, expertise and dollars in K-12 public education. Colorado’s Healthy Schools Successful Students represents a diverse set of stakeholders who are passionate about students, health and education in Colorado.