



For Immediate Release

January 29, 2008

ONTARIO SCHOOL COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE ACTIVE, HEALTHY LIVING

Local Students participate in Annual Province-Wide Living School Live It Up Challenge

Communities across ON (January 29, 2008) – Just as many people’s New Year’s resolutions for healthy living start to wane, thousands of Ontario elementary school students and teachers will be joined by local community members in a celebration to re-affirm their commitment to active, healthy living. On Tuesday, January 29th, at 10:30am students from 35 schools across Ontario will simultaneously participate in the fourth annual Living School *Live it Up* Challenge. This event is an opportunity for school communities to increase support for and excitement about their successes in ensuring active, healthy living opportunities for children and youth.

Students and staff at each Living School will be joined by parents, local community leaders, government officials, and local celebrities, for a celebration which will include physical activity challenges and healthy snacks. Many Living Schools have also challenged neighbouring schools to hold their own *Live it Up* events –engaging the larger community to join in and demonstrate their commitment to addressing these two risk factors of chronic disease and obesity.

“Ophea believes that school communities are the catalysts in building the commitment and capacity of all children and youth to lead active healthy lives.” Chris Markham, Executive Director, Ophea (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association).

Living School Successes

In its fourth year of implementation, Living School has proven to benefit the health and well-being of Ontario’s children and youth.

“Living School has greatly changed my life in many ways, not just in school, but at home too,” said a Grade 7 student at a Living School. “I am more happy, healthy, active and thoughtful about all the things I do and eat. I exercise, eat and think healthy.”

Living Schools are alive –not only with academics, but also with play, sport and activity.

Research shows that this powerful intervention is making a tremendous impact in school communities; Living School not only helps to improve physical activity levels and healthy eating behaviours, it also improves students’ readiness to learn, reduces behavioural problems, and creates a safe learning environment. More recent research demonstrates that Living Schools are able to implement the Ministry of Education’s Daily Physical Activity mandate more effectively. Students in Living Schools also report participating in physical activity in non-school settings. As well Living School has shown a positive affect on learning, with students scoring high results on annual Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments.

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About The Living School Initiative

Living School is a comprehensive school health initiative that brings together the entire school community – students, parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, public health professionals, sport and recreation organizations, community coalitions, local businesses, and municipal governments — to support and enhance active, health living for children and youth.

Using the school environment as a hub, Living School motivates, supports and assists school communities in addressing the risk factors for chronic disease and obesity – physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, tobacco use and alcohol and substance abuse. Because of its comprehensive and consultative approach, the Living School framework is also able to support other issues specific to a school community’s individual needs – such as bullying prevention, mental health, substance use and abuse, healthy growth and development, and personal safety and injury prevention.

Living School does not replace existing programs or services, it integrates them by providing a fertile environment wherein other health promotion initiatives can flourish.

Living School is a unique process that addresses and supports provincial coordination for the Foundations for a Healthy Schools, the Ministry of Education’s Healthy Schools Recognition Program, made available in Spring 2007.

The Living School initiative began with a successful pilot project in 2004/2005 which involved 17 schools. It has since been expanded to include 35 schools as Ophea continues to work to advocate and support a comprehensive school health approach in all school communities.

Living School was developed by Ophea in consultation with Ophea’s provincial partners and based on an international review of literature and best practices. Funding for the initiative has been generously provided by the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. For more information about the Living School initiative and Living School success stories, visit www.livingschool.ca.

About Ophea

Ophea (Ontario Physical and Health Education Association) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting Ontario school communities through advocacy, quality programs and services and partnership building. Ophea is committed to working in partnership with government and non-government organizations, and will continue to provide leadership and advocacy to foster active, healthy living in Ontario school communities. Ophea is led by the vision that all kids will value, participate in, and make a lifelong commitment to active, healthy living. Visit Ophea online at www.ophea.net.

For more information:

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