

HEALTHY NEIGHBORS

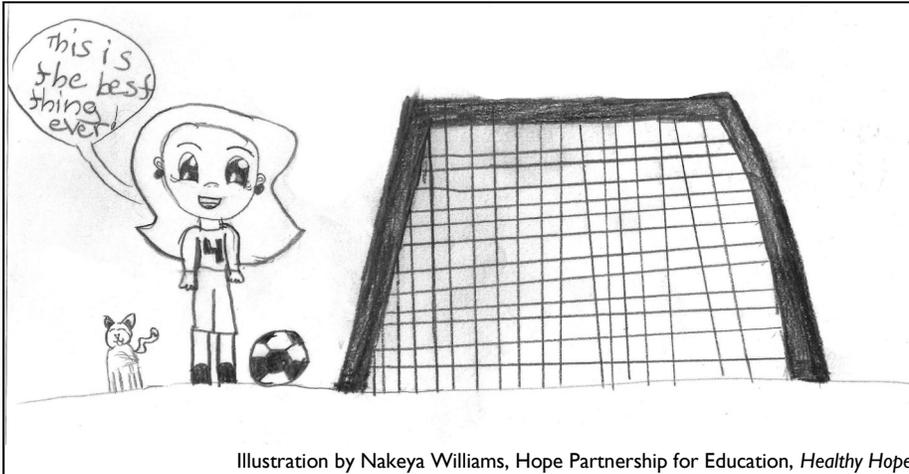


Illustration by Nakeya Williams, Hope Partnership for Education, *Healthy Hope*

Healthy Futures In program, good choices are priority

Ms. Lorina Marshall-Blake wants children to develop healthy eating and exercise habits.

"I want to stomp out childhood obesity," said Ms. Marshall-Blake, who is the president of the Independence Blue Cross Foundation. "But not one of us can do it alone."

The foundation recently co-hosted a conference in Philadelphia so community leaders could learn from each other how to help children make healthy choices. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia was the other host.

"We wanted to get the word out," Ms. Marshall-Blake said. "It takes a village to raise a healthy child."

In 2012, the Independence Blue Cross Foundation launched a special program called Healthy Futures to help children "Get Fit, Eat Right, and Stay Well." The program will run for three years in 25 schools in the five-county Philadelphia area.

In the "Get Fit" part of Healthy Futures, children get exercise tips from fitness experts like the Philadelphia Union, a major league soccer team. The Union helps promote physical activity and rewards children who

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Encouraging good eating habits

Teen is health role model

A 17-year-old high school senior is trying to make an impact on children's health in Philadelphia and across the country.

Kaseir Archie serves on a national youth advisory board that encourages children to stay fit. He also teaches middle school students about nutritious food. For instance, he said, he promotes choosing natural food items over artificial foods.

"I try to help the kids make the right eating choices," said Kaseir, who attends Bodine High School for International Affairs in

Philadelphia. "It's about preparing your body for the future."

As a member of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Youth Advisory Board, Kaseir said he tries to take what he learns from the group to raise awareness among his peers about leading a healthy lifestyle. The alliance has a mission to create healthy changes in schools and communities to reduce childhood obesity.

He said he applied to be a member of the alliance's advisory

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Youth reporters interview health experts

Five Philadelphia student journalists in the *Healthy NewsWorks* program recently interviewed several health experts at the national conference, *Healthy Futures: A Recipe for Childhood Wellness*.

The conference was organized by The Independence Blue Cross Foundation (IBC) and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

The Healthy Futures Initiative is a multiyear, \$3 million investment in childhood wellness.

Encouraging kids to watch what they eat

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board. He said it was one of the best decisions he ever made.

Kaseir said he thinks he has an advantage when he is spreading the healthy living message. "Kids pay more attention to other kids because they know where they are coming from," he said.

He suggests to other students that they start by making a small change. "You don't have to change your whole diet," he said.

For example, many football players at his school would stop for a snack at a nearby fast food store practice. Instead, he urged them to stop at another store that sells whole grain snacks. "It is equally convenient," he said, but the store offers healthier options.

Because of Kaseir's leadership on health issues, he was invited to speak recently on a panel at the Healthy Futures: A Recipe for Childhood Wellness Conference.



Illustration by Isaiah Outlaw

To stay fit, Kaseir plays ice hockey and runs track. He said he wishes that somebody would have taught him about eating the right foods when he was younger. Now, he said, he feels great that he can be a health mentor.

—By Alyse Nichols, Isaiah Outlaw, and Shyann Davis, *Hope Partnership for Education, Healthy Hope*

Sharing joy of being fit

Don Baxter started a company to fulfill a dream.

"I always wanted to be a business owner and also wanted to inspire people to live healthy lives," said Mr. Baxter who owns Fit Essentials.

Now, through his company, Baxter brings exercise to schools as a part of the Independence Blue Cross Foundation's Healthy Futures program. The Healthy Futures program started in the schools in the 2013-2014 school year. Its goal is to reduce childhood obesity by working on eating habits, fitness, and wellness.

In the program, Mr. Baxter works with children as an extra physical education teacher. His work is a part of the "Get Fit" part of Healthy Futures.

He said he visits schools regularly for about 45 minutes. With the children, he teaches strength training, cardiovascular exercises, and fitness games. Strength training could mean a piggyback relay race. "It's a good exercise for your legs," Mr. Baxter said.

He said everyone likes different activities. "Whatever is good for you, then keep doing it."

Mr. Baxter said his No. 1 goal is being a good role model and inspire kids to keep moving.

"You don't have to be the fastest, the fittest, or the strongest, as long as you do your best," Mr. Baxter said.

In his program, students succeed when they improve their own results. They don't compete against each other.

—By Brooklyn Grant and Paola Canals, *La Salle Academy, Healthy News*

Setting wellness as a goal

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stay on target with their health and fitness goals.

"Eat Right" is about teaching children how to choose a healthy diet and listen to their body, said Ms. Marshall-Blake. That part of the program teaches children about nutritious food through farm visits and other hands-on learning experiences.

"Stay Well" has a goal of reducing the number of students who are absent from school because of illnesses such as asthma. Another goal is for more students to be a healthy weight. The foun-

dation has teamed up with The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to help students stay well.

In her spare time, Ms. Marshall-Blake tries to stay healthy too. She walks for 45 minutes each morning on a local school track. She also goes to the gym.

She said she hopes the Healthy Futures will continue to bring people together around the topic of making kids healthier and reducing childhood obesity. "When you dream, you dream big," said Ms. Marshall-Blake.

—By Isaiah Outlaw, Alyse Nichols, and Shyann Davis