

# Carroll County Health Department

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## Health Department Helps Schools and Child Care Providers to Promote Wellness

Westminster, MD (June 17, 2016) – Sherry Osborne believes in starting health promotion early – with infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kids of all ages. Over the past year, she has worked with five schools and 13 child care providers in Carroll County to create plans to help kids learn and practice health habits.

Each of the five schools – Elmer Wolfe, Friendship Valley, and Taneytown Elementary, Shiloh Middle, and North Carroll High School – completed assessments to determine their biggest wellness needs. Then they created action plans, and wellness teams to carry out their plans, with a small stipend and funding for wellness materials.

“One school wanted to offer more physical activity for students during the day, so they purchased activity cards and kits for each grade to use in class. Another school created a garden for kids to grow tomatoes, and another school created a fitness challenge for staff. Each school wellness team was able to choose their own activities,” said Osborne.

The thirteen participating child care providers took an online course on wellness policies offered by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and created or improved their wellness policies. They received a stipend and some wellness equipment.

“Wellness policies help child care providers take clear, proven steps to improve child health, like eliminating sugary drinks, reducing screen time, offering more fruits and vegetables, and supporting breastfeeding. Policies also show families how their provider supports health, and how they can help their children make healthy choices at home,” said Osborne.

Osborne worked closely with Child Care Choices, Carroll County’s child care resource and referral center, and Carroll County’s University of Maryland Extension (UME) Office, to reach child care providers at Carroll Community College’s annual Child Care Training Day and at local provider meetings.

In addition to one-on-one activities with schools and child care providers, Health Department staff worked with the School Health Council to complete an update of the Carroll County Public School’s wellness policy. The new policy, approved by the Board of Education this week, reflects the school system’s commitment to health and wellness, and provides clear guidelines

for administrators and teachers at each school to make a positive impact on the health of their students, families, and communities. The School Health Council is a group of school and Health Department staff and community members who meet bi-monthly to discuss school health issues.

Funding for this project was provided by the DHMH's Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control. Technical assistance was provided by the Maryland State Department of Education and several other state agencies.

Though the program won't be funded next year, Osborne thinks that wellness activities will continue. "We gave the schools and child care providers tools to help them continue to promote wellness, and the Health Department will continue to support their efforts. By working with those who teach and guide our county's youngest residents, we hope we have inspired some healthy changes that will last a lifetime!"

The Carroll County Health Department's website can be found at <http://cchd.maryland.gov>

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#### Child Care Provider Contacts

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