



# Ulysses Byas Elementary is Taking Steps Forward in Supporting Youth Physical Activity

## Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

Physical activity is critical to the health and well-being of children, and every child has the right to, and can benefit from, opportunities to be physically active. Experts recommend that youth engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. The places where children live, learn, and play can either support or challenge their ability to meet this recommendation.

Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a New York State Department of Health funded initiative, is supporting grantees and their partners to ensure places throughout the state increase demand for, and access to, opportunities for New Yorkers to engage in physical activity. Western Suffolk BOCES is one grantee working with the Roosevelt Union Free School District (RUFSD) and Long Island-based community partners to provide places for youth to be active.

## Schools — A Place for Academics and Activity

Youth spend most of their day at school, underlining the important role schools have in supporting physical activity. New York is one of the few states that requires physical education with a mandated number of minutes per week by grade level. However, experts now recommend that schools take a more comprehensive approach to also include physical activity opportunities before, during, and after school. Following this model, known as Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP), schools use all opportunities for students to be physically active, meet the physical activity

recommendations, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be active for a lifetime.

Unfortunately, many school districts like RUFSD have tight schedules and limited resources. As a result, schools are challenged when it comes to offering physical activity opportunities beyond the bare minimum. Recess is often eliminated and physical activity before, during, and after school, is not provided in a way that fully benefits students. Knowing the importance of physical activity, Principal Hudson of Ulysses Byas Elementary School, was committed to making a change. The Wellness Committee and school partners were on-board to assist the school to



make this happen.

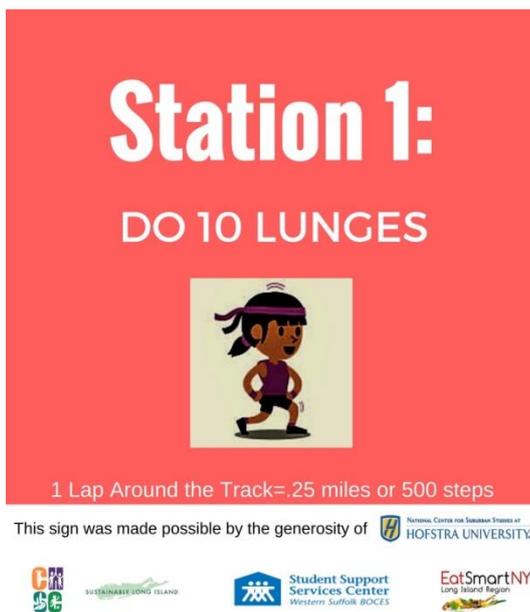
## Partnering to Promote Physical Activity

Limited daily recess and infrastructure to support physical activity were among the Wellness Committee's top concerns. Wellness champions Principal Hudson and Assistant Principal Stroughn want to create activity stations and physical activity breaks to provide more opportunities for students to engage in physical activity. The

## CHSC | Success Story

momentum and focus on physical activity has expanded with the help of Western Suffolk BOCES and other community partners. For the first time in the school's history, over 500 Ulysses Byas students walked approximately ½ mile trail around the school in celebration of National Walk to School Day. This one-day event brought excitement and momentum to make the trail permanent.

In collaboration with the school, Western Suffolk BOCES, Sustainable Long Island (SLI), Cornell Cooperative Extension and Choice For All created six outdoor track signs to be hung around the perimeter of the school as well as spray painted sneakers to mark the trail. RUFSD saw the benefit for this initiative and is awaiting approval to install the signage at Byas, Washington Rose and Centennial Avenue Elementary Schools.



### Steps Forward in the Community

Over a decade ago, a community improvement initiative was launched to revitalize Roosevelt, a hamlet on Long Island and home of RUFSD. The restoration of St. Francis Park was included in the plans but has been stalled for various reasons. The recent school commitment to increasing physical activity access for students and their

families renewed the focus on St. Francis Park restoration.

SLI, a non-profit organization, now closed, was working to revitalize communities, conducted an onsite assessment of the park grounds and surrounding neighborhood. In partnership with Choice For All, SLI shared the assessment findings with leaders at the town and county levels, at large community events and Parent Teacher Student Association meetings. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Principal Hudson and other community partners hosted a family walk where SLI rallied residents to action. SLI and Choice for All led community members in obtaining 1,100 signed petitions to submit to the Town of Hempstead and Nassau County in favor of restoring St. Francis Park.

With the support of CHSC, Western Suffolk



BOCES helped to spark school and community interest in promoting spaces and places for families to be active together. Western Suffolk BOCES will continue to support Roosevelt residents in their efforts to restore St. Francis Park.

To learn more about our work,  
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