

## Wellness Day at High School set for November 16

Van Buren High School staff and students will participate in a Wellness Day on Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>. Wellness Day activities have been planned that will promote healthy food choices and the importance of physical activity.

Since 1996, all U.S. schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans—scientifically-based nutrition advice that stresses modifying consumption of fat, sugar, and sodium for people more than two years old. The Van Buren Community School District is among school districts across the country that are trying to meet national nutrition standards in innovative ways that are appealing to their students. “We have already made major changes to our school lunch program,” said Judy Thomas, food service manager. “Students really enjoy the fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally.” Thanks to a Farm to School grant, all students in the district are receiving locally grown fruits and vegetables during school lunch and students at the middle school and high school are enjoying a salad bar.

Last school year, priorities were identified for improving nutrition at the high school. The priorities include: Ensure the a la carte offerings include appealing, low-fat items (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) and promote healthy food and beverage choices. The Wellness Day is designed to educate and motivate students to make better food choices and increase awareness about the importance of physical activity,

as well as, give the students an opportunity to voice their ideas and preferences regarding school meals. The activities during Wellness Day include, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., the opportunity to view booths and displays, talk with representatives from organizations that promote health, try fresh fruits and vegetables and students will complete a questionnaire on what healthy choices they would like to have available with school meals. School clubs, including FFA and FCCLA, will be assisting with the activities. To end the day, Jennifer Neal will be speaking to high school students at 2:45 p.m. Jennifer currently serves as the Healthy Kids Act Co-Project Director for the Iowa Department of Education and is also an ACE Certified Personal Trainer. She graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Dietetics and aspires to work as a Nutrition and Fitness Expert for a major television network. Jennifer will be delivering an empowering presentation entitled “School Wellness and YOU!” She will address the childhood obesity epidemic, the importance of nutrition and physical activity, how students can make a difference, and a list of 10 tips describing how to lead a successful school wellness initiative. The public is invited to attend

Wellness Day is scheduled during the week of parent-teacher conferences so parents can also view some of the displays and receive information on how to improve nutrition and increase physical activity at home.