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Exira Community School district to share in \$270,806 grant

By Laura Bacon

NT Staff Writer

EXIRA - Thirteen southwest Iowa school districts - including Exira, Anita and Elk Horn-Kimballton - will share in a \$270,806 grant to improve physical education and nutrition in their districts, according to information from the Exira Community Schools January Newsletter.

The grant is a Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grant (PEP grant) and a group of 23 school district staff members from the 13 southwest Iowa schools, with help from Dr. Ed Thomas of the Iowa Department of Education and Jan Norgaard of AEA 13, put together the grant proposal. The grant is entitled "Southwest Iowa Fitness Team (SWIFT) Physically and Nutritionally Improving Together."

The school districts involved include Exira, Anita (CAM), Elk Horn-Kimballton, AHST, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Riverside, Shenandoah, South Page, St. Alberts, Underwood, Fremont-Mills and Council Bluffs (Thomas Jefferson HS).

The purpose of the PEP grant program is to provide schools with funds to improve physical education programs for kids in kindergarten through 12th grade, to help make progress in meeting standards in physical education.

The funds for the grant will be used for equipment and professional development in a variety of areas, including: fitness education and assessment for kids' physical well-being; motor skills instruction, and physical activities to enhance physical, mental or social and motional development; development of and instruction about cognitive concepts related to motor skills and physical fitness supporting healthy lifestyles; opportunities to develop social and cooperative skills through physical activity; instruction in good eating and nutrition and opportunities for professional development for physical education instructors to help keep them current in new research, trends and issues in physical education.

The SWIFT consortium initially tried for the 2006-2007 funding, but was not accepted, then reapplied after an invitation in spring of 2007, resulting in the award.

"The Exira Schools, PE teachers and students are very excited and proud for receiving the PEP Grant," Lisa Dreier, Elementary PE instructor said in the newsletter. "Our students will be the ones who greatly benefit from this grant this year, and for many years to come!"

Tom Petersen, HS PE instructor said the majority of Exira's share of the grant funds, around \$20,000, would be used for equipment.

"I'm excited to see (what) the kids reaction to the new equipment will be," he said, "Hopefully they are excited."

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