

# Schools getting funds to update health policies

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Schools in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties will soon be able to update their policies on tobacco use, physical activity and nutrition, thanks to a grant from the state Department of Health.

The St. Lawrence County Health Initiative, Potsdam, was awarded a \$127,000, five-year grant to help area school districts develop, implement and enforce comprehensive policies on tobacco use, physical activity and nutrition.

"A lot of it is professional de-

velopment to help schools develop policies around these items," said Ruth A. Fishbeck, executive director of the initiative.

A total of \$2.5 million has been divided among 19 agencies statewide to help schools "create healthier environments for students and adults," according to a state Health Department press release.

"Working through policies has been shown to directly affect poor habits. Changing the environment through policies is what's going to help people be more active and not use tobacco

products," Ms. Fishbeck said. "Everyone in the state is working on a work plan, so we really have a unified statewide system in place of having schools develop these policies."

She said every school within Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties will have an opportunity over the course of the next five years to obtain some free extra help in improving their policies and professional development for them.

"We'll provide a small amount of money for them, for let's say if they want to put in a healthy vending machine, we could help

defray the expense of that," Ms. Fishbeck said.

During the first grant year, the following schools will receive help: Hermon-DeKalb, Edwards-Knox, Clifton-Fine, Harrisville, LaFargeville, Thousand Islands and Alexandria Central.

Barbara H. Bresnahan, Alexandria Central's K-12 health teacher, said Alexandria looks forward to improving policies the district already has in place for tobacco use, physical activity and nutrition.

"It's very exciting," she said. "It's kind of on the cutting edge, getting new ideas in place."

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