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Mom always said cleaning up would pay off some day
*Local school custodial team earns national public health award
by making learning about public health contagious for students*

HORTON, Mich.—Principals always say no running in the hallways, but the custodial team at Hanover-Horton Middle and High School is trying something new; they are teaching in the hallways. Cindy Fisher, Angela Guisinger, and John Smith use innovative solutions to involve students in maintaining clean surroundings, teaching them responsibility and instilling a sense of pride in their own school.

Due to their outstanding leadership, the team is a runner-up recipient of the national C.L.E.A.N.® Award. This honor includes a cash award of \$2,000, an all expense paid trip to the National Education Association (NEA) National ESP Conference to receive the award, and a one-year NEA membership.

“We take pride in maintaining a healthy and clean school for our students and faculty. We believe this creates a happy environment and promotes others to respect their surroundings,” said Cindy Fisher, Angela Guisinger and John Smith. “The perception by the community has always been positive and reassures our confidence that we have performed our job well.”

Two years ago, the existing cleaning program was completely restructured to emphasize cleanliness and sanitization rather than merely focusing on the appearance of classrooms. The school district invested in new equipment to improve efficiency, and staff development time was devoted to the proper use of the new equipment and cleaning products. The focus on sanitization has resulted in improved health at the school. Last year the school experienced five outbreaks of staph or MRSA skin infections. No outbreaks have occurred this year.

“NEA is proud to be a partner with the Soap and Detergent Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in presenting the 2009 C.L.E.A.N.® Awards! Custodians are critical partners in creating healthy, clean and safe schools for our students. They take so much pride in their work and know that what they do every day fosters an environment where students can learn more effectively,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “While the students and teachers are in class, in addition to their regular duties, custodians are the eyes and ears of the schools. They know who belongs in the school and who doesn’t, helping create a safe environment so students can learn and teachers can teach. Our schools could not function without our custodians.”

(more)

Fisher, Guisinger and Smith enjoy their work and the students. Each takes pride in the fact that they are part of the entire school team. In addition to their custodial duties, they may answer office phones in an emergency or assist in the lunch room if needed. They shovel snow and salt sidewalks to ensure students' safety. And, on more than one occasion, they have given lunch money to students so they won't go hungry.

"Custodians work diligently every day to keep our schools clean, which is essential to the health of students, teachers and school personnel," said Nancy Bock, SDA Vice President of Education. "These awards recognize the unsung but crucial role custodians play on a daily basis in schools across the nation."

The national C.L.E.A.N.® Award recognizes the contributions that custodians make to public health in their schools, communities and their profession. The award demonstrates outstanding leadership to school cleanliness and reflects the contributions that education support professionals (ESPs) can make to public health. The award program is a joint initiative of the National Education Association (NEA), the NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN), the Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is the first year for the award. Up to five awards will be presented annually: one top recipient and four runners-up.

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