

For Immediate Release

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**Pajaro Valley Unified Named Central Coast School District of the Year
by Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports**

District's Fitness 4 Life Program Recognized for its Support of Children's Fitness

Watsonville, Calif., Sept. 25, 2009 – The Pajaro Valley Unified School District has been named Central Coast Region School District of the Year by the *2009 Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards* for its Fitness 4 Life Program. Fitness 4 Life is dedicated to developing skills in youth for a healthier future and serves 22 afterschool sites in Santa Cruz County, allowing 6,000 kindergarten through 8th graders to take part in various alternative high-energy triathlon training activities.

Governor Schwarzenegger presented Joe Trautwein, Director of Student Services at Pajaro Valley USD, and Director of the Fitness 4 Life program, with the award at a ceremony at the State Capitol on September 16.

Michael Watkins, Superintendent of Santa Cruz County Office of Education, applauded the award. "The recognition is well deserved on a number of levels – for the contribution it makes to the educational community, afterschool and academic student programs and, above all, to the whole-life education of each student. I have observed the students' participation in the program first-hand, and I'm convinced it is a model program that should be replicated throughout Santa Cruz County and statewide. The District has tackled the issues of nutrition, obesity, fitness, and the critical impact each has on academics and student achievement. "

"The program started in 2004, in an effort to combat the higher than average obesity and diabetes rates in the Watsonville area, is supported by the S H. Cowell Foundation. It is due to this support that the program has grown and is now servicing large numbers of students. Joining the community and program in the summer of 2007 I was struck by the need for nutrition education that related and marketed to our youth. Fast food companies spend billions in marketing youth, it is the current norm. To have students hear our voice

we must market nutrition in a cool and unique way. Through the nutrition education component students are accessing fresh local produce and learning and understanding food system dynamics.” – Jen Bruno, Program coordinator.

Fitness 4 Life’s youth activities include swimming, biking, nutrition and hip-hop dance, sports, soccer, exercise and fitness, and karate. Families are also served through a Fitness 4 Families program offering weekly family education and free YMCA memberships. Youngsters in the program have improved their eating habits and are becoming more physically fit. Parents report eating healthier foods and exercising as a result of their children’s participation in a variety of exciting and engaging activities. In 2008 more than 450 students took part in a two-day annual triathlon, and more than 2,000 students were taught how to bike and swim safely. Research shows that regular physical activity during childhood and adolescence helps build healthier children, increases self-esteem, reduces the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes, and contributes to academic achievement.

Fitness 4 Life also participates in California’s *Healthy Behaviors Initiative*. The Initiative addresses serious health problems facing students in low-income communities and most at risk of obesity by providing afterschool programs resources and tools to increase the healthy eating and physical activity of their students, staff and families. Two Fitness 4 Life school sites successfully using Initiative-developed practices have been certified as *Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers* so they may coach other programs on how to instill healthy habits in their students.

“Fitness For Life is fun, challenging and inspires all the students to participate. We believe that our program’s activities – such as swimming, biking and running in a non-competitive atmosphere – promote lifelong interest in physical activity. Our trainers, who are primarily high school students, emphasize participation and teach safe and proper technique for all of the sports involved in triathlon,” said Trautwein. “My greatest reward is to see our students with perspiration and smiles on their faces. They are having fun, getting fit, and doing things they never thought they could do. So many good things coming together in this one program.”

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About The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

The California Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting physical activity for all Californians with an emphasis on children and youth. Governor Schwarzenegger is the Honorary Chairman and Council members include Chairman Jake Steinfeld, Vice Chairman Peter Vidmar, and California sports legends such as Tony Hawk, Laila Ali, Misty May-Treanor, and Jerry Rice. Governor's Council Key Initiatives include the Governor's Challenge, the Governor's Council Spotlight Awards Presented by Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, the Governor's Council Activity Guide, the Live Like a Champion Tour powered by Anthem Blue Cross and Exercise is Medicine. Founding sponsors are the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente. For more information visit www.CalGovCouncil.org.

For more information on the Healthy Behaviors Initiative, a project of the Center for Collaborative Solutions and funded by the California Department of Public Health, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and The California Endowment, please visit www.afterschoolsolutions.org