

HILLCREST INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL STUDENTS THRILLED WITH NEW FITNESS EQUIPMENT
Project Fit America, Excelsa Health Provide Advanced Exercise Station & Program for Students

NORTH HUNTINGDON, Pa. — Nearly 850 Hillcrest Intermediate School students, Norwin School District personnel, regional leaders, the Pirate Parrot, and “Norm” the IUP Crimson Hawk celebrated the school’s new fitness equipment and program at a special kickoff ceremony on Wednesday, October 1, 2014.

A team of Hillcrest students demonstrated the various stations of the outdoor equipment, including the Pole Climb, Vault Bar, Pull Up Bar, Sit Up/Push Up, Horizontal Ladder, Parallel Bar, and Step Up. The student demonstrators included Alex Gabauer, Jordyn Turcovski, Justin Turcovski, Mara Polczynski and Delaney Williamson.

The Oct. 1 kickoff ceremony was the result of a grant that Hillcrest applied for through two foundations affiliated with Excelsa Health. Excelsa Health, through its foundations, pledged more than \$53,000 to pilot this program in three schools, including Hillcrest Intermediate School, Greater Latrobe Junior High School, and Heritage Elementary School (Franklin Regional). Norwin’s portion received was \$17,500, with the School District providing a nearly equal amount in materials and excavation work to prepare the site.

The new program at Hillcrest came about through Excelsa Health’s collaboration with Project Fit America. Project Fit America is a non-profit organization that is trying to curb the trend of childhood obesity by providing Fitness in Education programs in elementary and middle schools.

The Project Fit America program provided Hillcrest Intermediate School with not only state-of-the-art outdoor fitness equipment, but also numerous indoor fitness program materials and comprehensive training and curriculum. The program will be integrated into the school and used on a daily basis. A comprehensive summary of the Project Fit America Program / Excelsa Health partnership [is available by clicking here](#).

Speakers at the kickoff event included Mr. Brian O’Neil, Hillcrest Intermediate School Principal; Mr. Ted Kopas, Westmoreland County Commissioner; Mr. Ron Ott, Senior Vice President, Community and Government Relations for Excelsa Health; Dr. William Kerr, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Christopher Tennant, Health and Physical Education teacher; and Ms. Mary Ann Stevens, Health and Physical Education teacher. Mr. Tennant and Ms. Stevens wrote the grant application that released the funding for Hillcrest Intermediate School, with efforts led by retired Hillcrest Principal Rose Dvorchak and Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education Natalie McCracken, who were both in attendance at the ceremony.

Two Norwin maintenance employees – Mr. Steve Brentzel and Mr. Bob Gess – were applauded and celebrated by those in attendance for their quality work in installing the outdoor fitness equipment this past summer. Mr. O’Neil also displayed a Proclamation from Governor Tom Corbett honoring Hillcrest’s commitment to fitness.

The Pirate Parrot and Norm the IUP Crimson Hawk electrified the student crowd with their high-energy cheerleading and their slapstick antics. The Pirate Parrot led the students in a deafening “Let’s Go Bucs!” cheer for the Pittsburgh Pirates that could be heard all across the Norwin campus.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Hillcrest Principal Mr. Brian O’Neil had his head publicly shaved because his students met a fund-raising goal to benefit pediatric cancer research. At the school’s recent Crazy Hat and Hair Day, Principal O’Neil challenged students to raise more than \$1,200, promising that if they did, he would have his head shaved at the ceremony. Hillcrest students responded by raising \$1,444.15.



Above: Hillcrest Intermediate School students Mara Polczynski and Jordyn Turcovski demonstrate the Pole Climb, which is one of several new fitness stations at Hillcrest thanks to Project Fit America and Excelsa Health. **Below:** Ms. Mary Ann Stevens, a Health and Physical Education teacher, appears aghast as she shaves the head of Hillcrest Principal Brian O’Neil. Mr. O’Neil pledged to have his head shaved if his students met a fund-raising goal to help pediatric cancer, and they responded by raising \$1,444.15. A photo gallery from this event is available at www.norwinsd.org.

