



## News Release

June 11, 2007

For immediate release

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# Wenatchee students walk for their health and for prize money for their schools

*Wenatchee schools win money in Asuris's **Move It** competition which focuses on fighting obesity*

WENATCHEE – Healthy students are better students, at least in the Wenatchee School District, whose fifth-graders recently completed the **Move It** walking challenge sponsored by Asuris Northwest Health.

Combating childhood obesity by walking was another reason students in Wenatchee fifth-grade classrooms participated. They competed for prize money with other fifth-grade classrooms in their school district.

The schools in the district earned money for health- or fitness-related activities and/or playground equipment for their schools. Wenatchee School District will split the \$4,000 donation, which Asuris presented at Monday night's school board meeting, among all of the elementary schools in the district.

“Our goal was to encourage physical fitness among the students,” said Asuris President Mary McWilliams. The program was designed to mix health awareness, action

and competition into the daily lives of the school children. “Walking is a positive health benefit to all kids, and it’s especially important for kids who need to be more active to maintain a healthy body weight,” McWilliams said.

**Move It** aims to raise awareness about the importance of active habits and encourage each fifth-grader to bring his or her daily steps closer to the range that maintains a healthy body weight.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, which focuses on major health care issues facing the United States, 11 percent of children in Washington are overweight.

As a leading health insurer in the state, Asuris is concerned about this trend impacting not only our children’s current health and learning abilities, but their social and economic futures as well.

The six-week **Move It** program was administered by homeroom, fifth-grade teachers and/or physical education teachers who integrated the program into both the academic and Physical Education classes. Asuris supplied each student a **Move It** water bottle, pedometer and other walking materials, and encouraged their participation. With assistance from teachers, **Move It** was designed to motivate students to be active every day by walking. Program elements included personal and team challenges, as well as role models based on historical explorers from the American Westward Expansion.

“If we give children the skills and tools they need to take charge of their own health at an early age, we can help them develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime,” McWilliams said.

Asuris earlier this year conducted a similar walking challenge among members of its state legislature, encouraging people of all ages to engage in healthy activities such as walking. 12<sup>th</sup> District Senator Linda Evans Parlette earned a most improved walker award

in that challenge, and Asuris presented a separate \$1,000 grant to Rock Island Elementary in the Eastmont district Monday in recognition of Senator Parlette's accomplishment.

### **About Asuris Northwest Health**

Based in Spokane, Asuris Northwest Health offers a full range of health care coverage options, including dental and vision coverage, for Eastern Washington employers and individuals. Asuris also offers Medicare supplemental plans and Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, and provides member access to more than 19,000 health care providers. For more information, visit the company's Web site at [www.asuris.com](http://www.asuris.com). Asuris Northwest Health, a not-for-profit health plan, is a subsidiary of Regence BlueShield, a leading health plan in Washington.

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