

# *Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center*

The Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center was founded in 1989 with a mission to educate and inspire people of all ages to make healthy choices. Our vision is to be a leading resource for innovative, high-quality, effective health education. Since its noble beginning as one woman's vision, the Byrnes Health Education Center has evolved into a dynamic, driven educational organization, dedicated to the communities it serves. LearnToBeHealthy.org is one of the means by which the Byrnes Health Education Center has reached out to communities around the world. Here are some of its major accomplishments.

- 1993            Capital Campaign**  
The Center launches its Capital Campaign which eventually raised 3 Million Dollars.
- 1994            Building Renovations**  
Renovation of DE Stetler & Sons Building is completed.
- 1995            Center Opens**  
The Center opened in January 1995 with two dramatic teaching theaters, General Health and Family Living/Life Begins. The Body Shop opened that September. Housing multi-media exhibits, larger-than-life models, and light-animated displays, these interactive theaters add multiple modalities to the learning process. Over 30 *Theater* programs are offered.
- First Annual Family Health Festival**  
In April of that year, the Center began its annual tradition of hosting a Family Health Festival to thank the community for its support
- C. Everett Koop Visit**  
In November, Former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop visited and said, "You have found a way to put pizzazz into prevention!" He then agreed to become an Honorary Member of the Center's Advisory Board.
- HeartBeat Scholarship Program**  
The Center establishes the HeartBeat Scholarship, an annual campaign that provides partial scholarship for every student who participates in Center programs.
- 1996            Substance Theater**  
Substance Use and Abuse Theaters, funded by Harley-Davidson opens.
- The Center welcomes its 20,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*
- 1997            Rotary Partnership**

Rotary District 7390 adopts the Center as a District Project. Clubs in the District offer support by helping to market the Center to their community and by funding tuition costs for their local schools.

*The Center welcomes its 50,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**1998**

**Nutrition Theater**

The fifth Teaching Theater, Nutrition and Fitness, opens in September with funding provided by The Bob Hoffman Foundation and York Hospital.

**Wellness Works**

The Center begins offering adult education programs through Wellness Works, a comprehensive adult health education and corporate wellness program. This program is designed to assist employees and their family members in making voluntary health behavior changes to reduce their health risks, decrease health care costs, and increase individual productivity.

*The Center welcomes its 100,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**1999**

**Discovery Carts**

Discovery Carts, hands-on activity stations are offered to extend the learning experience of Theater programs.

**2000**

**Evaluation**

A research project conducted by Penn State found that students who participated in one of the Center's tobacco education programs, *Huffin' N' Puffin'*, learned, on average, 60% more about the dangers of smoking than students in a control group. More importantly, the research also showed that those students retained 47% of their knowledge gains after an eight week period.

**Summer Camps**

The Center begins offering unique Summer Camps. "Body Works" and "Whodunnit" now educate hundreds of children each summer.

**Planned Giving**

The Center begins its planned giving efforts by establishing an independent endowment and creating the Circle of Hearts, a giving society for those who make endowment or bequest gifts to the Center.

*The Center welcomes its 150,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**2001**

**Body Shop**

The Body Shop for Early Learners re-opens with new exhibits thanks to a generous gift from Mildred Gabrielson.

**Mascot**

Simon, a loveable purple character, becomes the new Mascot of the Center.

**2002****Learning Labs**

The Center launches Learning Labs, with funding from the American Cancer Society, PA Division, and begins traveling to classrooms throughout the region. Healthy topics are chosen by the classroom teacher and activity stations manned by parent volunteers. A dissection of a real organ is often included.

**Tobacco Funding**

The Center was awarded funds from the PA tobacco settlement to create a new position of School Health Coordinator and to conduct additional tobacco prevention programs for several “pilot” School Districts.

**e-Learning**

With seed funding from the Highmark Foundation, the Center embarks on an e-learning Initiative, consisting of the creation of a revamped web site ([www.byrneshec.com](http://www.byrneshec.com)), and the development of the keystone of this initiative, HeLP-Kits (Health Education Lesson Plan Kits).

*The Center welcomes its 300,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**2003****New Building Addition**

The Highmark Foundation e-Learning Wing is constructed and opens in September, 2003. The addition provides a new home for all of the Byrnes HEC Health Educators and prepares the Center for future growth and development.

**2004****HeLP-Kits**

The beginnings of what is now [LearntobeHealthy.org](http://LearntobeHealthy.org), HeLP-Kits were designed as a series of high-quality, Internet-based educational modules that employ a variety of media and educational modalities tied to specific learning objectives, and State and National Education Standards.

*The Center welcomes its 400,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**2005****Federal Funding**

The Byrnes HEC, with support from Congressman Todd Platts, received generous grant funding through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to deliver over 500 Theater and Outreach programs to children. These programs, which focused on tobacco and drug prevention, reached over 17,000 children during the 2005-2006 school year. Coupled with the activities available through the

LearntobeHealthy.org website, thousands more were reached electronically with the message to stay tobacco-free.

With the support of Senator Arlen Specter, another department of HHS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), awarded grant funding to the Byrnes HEC to develop the newest e-Learning initiative on LearntobeHealthy.org: obesity prevention activities and lesson plans.

*The Center welcomes its 500,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**2006**

**[www.LearntobeHealthy.org](http://www.LearntobeHealthy.org)**

In January, 2006, the Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center launched its e-Learning website LearntobeHealthy.org. LearntobeHealthy.org represents the culmination of years of effort to develop a high-quality, innovative educational tool enabling the Center to reach far beyond the region with the message of healthy living. In only a few short months it had won two prestigious awards for innovation.

*The Center welcomes its 600,000<sup>th</sup> Visitor*

**National Impact**

By the end of 2006, LearntobeHealthy.org's membership tops 12,000 with users from every state in the Nation and 168 countries around the globe. The educational has now been recognized by several national organizations including USA Today and Highlights magazine.

**2007**

**Highmark Healthy High 5**

Generous funding from Highmark Healthy High 5, an initiative of the Highmark Foundation, enabled the Byrnes Health Education Center to grow the membership base of LearntobeHealthy.org to over 40,000. The site also introduced a special section designed for teenagers.