

**From the Abilene Reporter News
Reprinted with Permission**

Fitness program encourages youth activity

Special to the Abilenian
Wednesday, February 6, 2008

- For the 2007-08 school year, the Alliance for Women & Children After-School Care Program has incorporated a new fitness component called “Happy Feet.”

The fundamentals of soccer are used to promote an active lifestyle and teach the children, both boys and girls, the benefits of healthy living. The children perform soccer drills and learn healthy eating and exercise habits through an “energy-in/energy-out” model. Happy Feet is planning to continue the mission of “ReCharge,” the fall’s football program.

“Kids are spending less time being active and more time in front of the TV,” Patrick Lloyd, director of Happy Feet, said in a press release, “so by using programs like Happy Feet we can encourage children to be more active and instill the values of healthy living.”

A recent study measuring the Body Mass Index of fourth-graders in the Abilene Independent School District reported that 43 percent were overweight and 26 percent were in danger of becoming overweight.

Overweight children have a greater risk of developing health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma. Alliance for Women & Children is optimistic that adding Happy Feet to the After-School Care Program will help lower these risks for area children.

“Children of this age have so much energy, and Happy Feet provides them with an outlet that uses the basics of soccer to teach the importance of a healthy lifestyle, promote fitness and encourage self-confidence,” said Janelle Sands, After-School Care Program manager.

Alliance for Women & Children After-School Care Program reaches 625 children each day to ensure no child goes home alone. The program provides nutritious snacks, crafts, homework time, games and outside play time for elementary-age children. It is the largest licensed program of its kind in Abilene and is currently offered at Buffalo Gap Elementary, Eula Elementary, Tye Elementary and 15 elementary schools in AISD.

Contact Alliance for Women & Children at (325) 677-5321 to get more information about this program.

