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Olympians join forces for fitness at WHS

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Wisconsin Olympians Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph make a rock star-like entrance to the Whitewater High School gymnasium Oct. 14 during a promotional event for the "Movin' and Munchin' Schools" program administered by the Department of Public Instruction. (Photo by Matt Schwenke)

It may not have been a rock concert, but the entrance Wisconsin Olympians Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph made at the Whitewater High School gymnasium Oct. 14 had all the excitement of a big production.

Favor Hamilton and FitzRandolph came together to promote healthy eating, fitness and the role they play in academic excellence through a program called "Movin' and Munchin' Schools" that drew a crowd of more than 2,000 people from kindergarten through twelfth grade students as well as the general public.

"The Movin' and Munchin' program helps kids and their family members focus on the right tools to achieve their goals," said FitzRandolph. "Physical activity and eating right is the foundation for kids to perform well."

The Movin' and Munchin' program is administered through the Department of Public Instruction and is sponsored by the WEA Trust, a not-for-profit group health insurer that insures many Wisconsin public school employees. The program encourages kids, their families and public school employees to eat healthy and exercise regularly through the program offered in their local schools. Schools that participate in the Movin' and Munchin' program may receive up to \$1,000 in rewards.

"Achieving your goals comes from hard work, determination and being smart about what you eat," said Favor Hamilton. "Exercise and healthy eating every day makes for a winning combination for kids, their families and the staff in Wisconsin's great schools."

"I encourage kids and adults alike to find an exercise they can enjoy together and get moving!"

Whitewater was chosen as the site of the event because of their strong commitment to health and wellness and how fitness plays a key role in a child's academic achievements. Currently all five of Whitewater's public schools have signed on to participate in the program and may be eligible for the program's highest financial award.

"I am very pleased to see the interest of the Whitewater School District students and staff on preventative health measures and recognizing their inextricable link to academic excellence," said WUSD superintendent Suzanne Zentner. "Having all of our schools in the district participate in this program speaks our commitment and belief in the program and we are so appreciative of this opportunity."



Favor Hamilton and FitzRandolph ask a crowd of about 2,000 questions about their diet and fitness choices during the event at WHS. (Photo by Matt Schwenke)

"To have two of the most outstanding Wisconsin Olympic athletes come to our district to share their important message is an honor."

FitzRandolph, a 3-time Olympic speed skater and 2002 gold medalist in the 500 meters, and Hamilton, a 3-time Olympian and holder of 7 U.S. championships and 9 NCAA running titles, serve as honorary chairpersons of the Movin' and Munchin' program.

The event included speeches and activities with Favor Hamilton and FitzRandolph as well as speeches from Zentner and Fred Evert, Executive Director of the WEA Trust.

"The WEA Trust, in partnership with DPI, school districts and their employees, is thrilled to see the Whitewater Unified School District take a leadership role in this great program by having all of its schools participate," said Evert. "They are setting the bar high for the rest of Wisconsin."