

# D300 schools meet HealthierUS School Challenge

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CARPENTERSVILLE — “It’s a message of healthiness and — and, um, dancing,” said Liliana Santiago, a second-grader at Parkview Elementary School.

“People were singing the song like it was the latest Katy Perry or Lady Gaga song — students and staff and parents,” Community Unit District 300 spokeswoman Allison Strupeck said.

Self-proclaimed rockstar nutritionist Jill Jayne appears with a student from Golfview Elementary School in Carpentersville in a YouTube video about District 300’s success in the federal HealthierUS School Challenge. | Courtesy YouTube

And Jill Jayne, the self-proclaimed rockstar nutritionist, added, “We weren’t just going to check off a box. We were going to make their wellness policy rock.”

## On the Web

Watch “D300 Presents Behind the Challenge: Jill Jayne” on YouTube:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZVbUfre7PE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZVbUfre7PE)

All are talking about the songs, videos and wellness efforts that were part of the partnership between Jayne and District 300 throughout the 2010-11 school year.

That partnership culminated this month with the last of the rockstar nutritionist’s three videos about the Carpentersville-area school district — and the announcement that 16 of the district’s 17 elementary

schools have met the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s HealthierUS School Challenge.

“I feel excited about it,” District 300 grants specialist Eric Knutson said. “I don’t know that it was originally a personal mission of mine to change the health of District 300 students, but it definitely became one.”

The HealthierUS School Challenge is a national program established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to recognize schools that take specific steps to improve nutrition and address childhood obesity.

The school district was awarded a \$56,000 HealthierUS School Challenge grant in December 2009 to both assess and award its elementary schools' current menus and wellness-related efforts. Based on meeting those challenge levels, the elementary schools could be awarded bronze, silver, gold and the Gold Award of Distinction recognition.

In January, the USDA awarded Golfview Elementary School its Gold Award of Distinction, making it the first non-charter school in the state to earn that distinction.

Afterward, the district began serving its improved, USDA gold-standard lunch menu at all its elementary schools. And earlier this month, the USDA announced that 15 more District 300 elementary schools had met the challenge. Only Lakewood School did not meet the requirements, which Knutson said was because the Carpentersville school is both an elementary and middle school.

That netted the district about \$12,500 from the USDA to continue its wellness efforts, Knutson said. That includes incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains into its lunch menu, increasing the amount of physical activity its students get to 90 minutes a week, and tracking students' body mass index to make sure the district's efforts are having an effect. Strupeck added.

It also means that D300 schools make up more than a quarter of the 58 Illinois schools that have met the challenge. Since the challenge began in 2004, the USDA now has certified 1,220 — close to its goal of 1,250 by the end of the month, according to the USDA website.

Jayne's last online video, "D300 presents Behind the Challenge: Jill Jayne," is a VH1-style behind-the-scenes look at the partnership between the rockstar nutritionist and District 300. The video features interviews with District 300 students and staff and footage of the live "Jump with Jill" shows Jayne performed this spring semester at every elementary school in the district.

Previous videos Jayne posted online include the music video for "Going Gold," an original song celebrating Golfview's Gold Award of Distinction; and "The Jill Jayne Chronicles: Uncovering the Case of the Healthier US School Challenge." In that video, she sets out as an "investigative dietician ... incognito" to uncover what steps District 300 schools took to meet the HealthierUS School Challenge.

Strupeck called their partnership "unprecedented." Jayne never before had produced an original song for an individual school district, she said.

"Many of our students and staff got to star in the videos, and that was incredibly exciting to them and their families," she said. "We got to see our principals, who maybe aren't known for their comedic timing, give the late-night hosts a run for their money."