

# First lady Michelle Obama to fete D300

By Emily McFarlan emcfarlan@stmedianetwork.com July 5, 2011 6:37PM



First lady Michelle Obama takes part in Wal-Mart's announcement of a comprehensive effort to provide healthier and more affordable food choices to their customers, Thursday, Jan. 20, 2011, in Washington. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen)

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CARPENTERSVILLE — Community Unit School District 300 leaders have accepted an invitation to a special reception with first lady Michelle Obama later this month at the White House, the district announced Tuesday.

And district grant specialist Eric Knutson, who headed up its efforts to meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's HealthierUS School Challenge, also has been nominated to speak at that reception, according to District 300 spokesperson Allison Strupeck.

The reception will recognize the Carpentersville-area school district and others "that have been successful in fighting childhood obesity," Strupeck said.

"This event will not only celebrate the success of school districts like ours, but also encourage and energize us to focus on this in the long term."

District 300 had announced last month that 16 of its 17 elementary schools met the HealthierUS School Challenge, putting a quarter of the Illinois schools with that distinction in the state's sixth-largest district. (The USDA did not consider Lakewood School in Carpentersville, which serves grades five and six, an "elementary school," according to the district.)

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

It has been endorsed by the first lady's LET'S MOVE! initiative, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, according to the LET'S MOVE website.

## On the Web

For more information about LET'S MOVE!, visit [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov).

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in the U.S. have tripled, and nearly one in three children is overweight or obese, the website said. Obama has worked to raise awareness of the health and financial implications for the country if that trend is not reversed: One-third of all children born in 2000 or later could suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives, and many others from chronic obesity-related health problems such as heart disease and high blood pressure.

"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake," Obama said at the 2010 launch of LET'S MOVE.

### **Using grant money**

District 300 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.

In January, Golfview Elementary School in Carpentersville became the first non-charter school in the state to earn the USDA's Gold Award of Distinction, the highest level of recognition in the challenge. The district's other elementary schools followed after all began serving a USDA gold-standard lunch menu and hosted presentations by "rockstar nutritionist" Jill Jayne, who developed a series of entertaining videos for the district to educate its students and parents about healthy eating.

"At this point, we're really only beginning to tap into the issue of childhood obesity," Strupeck said. "We have the structure in place to fight childhood obesity."

Staff from each of those 16 elementary schools and lunch provider Aramark — as well as other District 300 leaders — will attend the reception Friday, July 29, at the White House, Strupeck said. Each will pay his or her own way for the trip, she added.

Among them, Knutson was nominated to speak at the reception by the Midwest Region of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food & Nutrition Service. Strupeck said the district will find out later this month if he was indeed selected.

And each personally has pledged to continue the district's wellness efforts, she 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 those efforts are having an effect.

"The national trend is children's BMI is up, up, up. We'd like to not only flatline that in our district but also decrease it," Strupeck said.

"The issue of childhood obesity is so out of control, it's going to take several years — maybe a generation — to correct the problem."