

Senator tours junior high during visit to Forrest City

Published: December 16, 2008

Alan Smith, T-H Staff Writer

The Forrest City Junior High School played host to U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln this morning as part of her three-stop visit to Forrest City.

Lincoln arrived at the school at about 10:45 a.m. after a visit to the Forrest City Federal Correctional Complex. She was scheduled to appear at the annual East Arkansas Enterprise Community public meeting later this afternoon.

The visit to FCJHS was in honor of the school earning a bronze ranking from the National Healthy Schools Program (NHSP), which is an effort to help students make healthier choices in their lives. Katie Jones, FCJHS principal, spoke about Lincoln's visit.

"We gave her a tour of our PE4Life Lab, which is connected to the students health, and our cafeteria," said Jones. "We spoke to her about all of the things that we are doing to make our children healthier here at the junior high school. We are very proud that our school was the only school in the state to receive recognition from the NHSP."

During the visit, Lincoln visited with students Avery Winston and Mary Burks. Winston, now a ninth grader, and Burks who is now an eighth grader, both visited Washington D.C. last school year with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (AHG).

According to the AHG Web site, the alliance is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation. The site says the effort creates a new generation of healthy Americans by addressing one of the nation's leading public health threats childhood obesity.

"The trip they made was through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with funding from the Clinton Foundation," stated Jones. "They both visited Senators Lincoln and Mark Pryor in Washington to talk about making their generation healthier."

Lincoln said that she was impressed with her visit and what the school has done to improve the health of its students.

"They've done a tremendous amount of work here to improve the health of their students," commented Lincoln. "This is a challenge that few people have undertaken. To a great extent they have created a very healthy culture here.

"I don't know about other people, but for me, it is difficult to change my habits," continued Lincoln. "To teach them to make better choices and that they have the power to make better choices is very important. What they are really doing is teaching important

life skills. It is impressive how they have taught these students. When they learn these things early, these skills will stick with them throughout their lives.”

Lincoln also gave her thoughts on the school and its staff.

“They have a wonderful staff and administration here,” Lincoln said. “They are dedicated employees and really give a great effort to teach the students here. I’m very impressed with the school.”

Jones stated that she was very pleased that Lincoln could make the visit today.

“We are very happy that the Senator could visit us,” added Jones. “Her visit was originally scheduled to take place in May, but she had a conflict.

“Her staff has been contacting us to find another time for the visit and we are pleased that she could make it here.”