



Press Release  
Be Healthy Berrien

## Building a Healthier STEAM Academy at MLK with YMCA

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This is the third article in a 4-part series highlighting Be Healthy Berrien and YMCA of Southwest Michigan's worksite wellness programs and services. To read the previous series articles, visit [www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/news](http://www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/news).

YMCA of Southwest Michigan, through its partnership with Be Healthy Berrien, is bringing a YMCA Worksite Wellness Program to four worksites in Berrien County, including on-site YMCA Diabetes Prevention Programs (YDPP), Health Coaching, Lunch-and-Learn sessions, and expert help for worksite leaders to build healthy practices that help support healthy choices for their employees. Ballard Elementary School in Niles, Southside School in Niles, STEAM Academy at MLK in Benton Harbor, and Westwoods of Niles have voluntarily chosen to participate in the program to help make their worksites healthier.

STEAM Academy at MLK in Benton Harbor is a champion in promoting good health for its staff. The on-site programming has great participation, and they have even created a Health Committee that is working on several new wellness projects. For STEAM Academy at MLK in Benton Harbor, offering this program to its staff is just one way they are working to create a healthy place to learn, work, and play. The YMCA also provides Healthy U programming to their students, a program designed to help kids be more active and promote healthy behaviors.

Monica Norton, Healthy Living Director at YMCA of Southwest Michigan, is one of the coaches in the program. Monica states "One thing I am most proud of as a coach is seeing the support the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program provides for a group of individuals with common goals. The amount of support and accountability is amazing and the groups really become family. Participants realize they are not alone and watching them come together as a group to begin their healthy journey together is something special to watch."

"Be Healthy Berrien is working to make our community better by creating healthier places to live, work, learn, and play" says Heather Cole, Director of Be Healthy Berrien. "We're proud to be working with YMCA of Southwest Michigan to bring worksite wellness programs to employers of all sizes, and to encourage all employers to use the free Be Healthy Berrien Worksite Wellness toolkit." You can find this interactive toolkit online at [www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/worksite-wellness](http://www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/worksite-wellness).

YMCA of Southwest Michigan offers customizable worksite wellness programs to employers throughout Berrien County, including on-site services, expert advice, and corporate membership



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options. For more information on YMCA Worksite Wellness services, contact Monica Norton at the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph YMCA, (269) 428-9622.

The YMCA Worksite Wellness Program is supported by Be Healthy Berrien through a 4x4 Grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the Michigan Health and Wellness 4 x 4 Coalition Initiative is to implement Michigan's priority strategies to improve health and reduce obesity by creating healthier communities, expanding prevention activities and empowering people to make healthy choices and adopt health as a core personal value. The expected outcomes include changes in weight status and improvements in healthy eating and physical activity.

Be Healthy Berrien is a county-wide partnership of Berrien County Health Department, Lakeland Health, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, United Way of Southwest Michigan, and YMCA of Southwest Michigan. These organizations are working together to reduce obesity and chronic illness by creating healthy places to live, work, learn, and play. For more information about Be Healthy Berrien, please visit [www.BeHealthyBerrien.org](http://www.BeHealthyBerrien.org).

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