

Colorado Governor Ritter Visits Kunsberg School

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DENVER — On May 14 Colorado Governor Bill Ritter visited the Kunsberg School on the campus of National Jewish Medical and Research Center to encourage students participating in the Colorado Kids Marathon Milers Program. Dressed the part in sweats and running shoes, the governor ran laps with Kunsberg students during training for the Post-News Colorado Colfax Marathon, which consisted of running 25.2 miles prior to the race on May 20.

Colorado Governor Bill Ritter runs with students at Kunsberg School.

"As someone with asthma, I know it's important to stay active and keep exercising," Governor Ritter told the children. "I control my asthma so that I can bicycle and be active in other ways. So, if I'm running slowly today, it's not because of my asthma, it's because I'm old!" he joked. It was the first time the governor spoke publicly about his asthma.

Governor Ritter's visit helped National Jewish spread an important message that asthma can and should be controlled so that all Coloradoans, including children and adults with asthma, can lead healthy, active lives.

"Hearing the governor talk about how he's successfully managed his asthma and is an active person is a great message for our students as they participate in the Marathon Milers Program and learn to use running and walking as way to improve fitness and adopt healthy lifestyles," said John Reid, Director of Kunsberg School.

Of the 30 Kunsberg students who completed 25.2 miles before race day, 24 students crossed the finish line at the marathon after a final one-mile run.

Kunsberg School is a free, state-approved school for elementary school children whose chronic diseases are causing them to miss many days of school and fall behind academically. Most children at Kunsberg have asthma, but a significant number have other diseases treated at National Jewish, such as cystic fibrosis, and other lung diseases.

"Colorado is proud to be the home of this unique school," Governor Ritter told the crowd gathered in Kunsberg's gymnasium. He encouraged Kunsberg's chronically ill students to "keep exercising, keep taking your medicine and keep doing what you need to do. I really, really admire you. I applaud you."

"Kunsberg School exemplifies the kind of innovative and proactive disease education that National Jewish is committed to," said Michael Salem, MD, President and CEO of National Jewish. "Governor Ritter's participation with these kids puts a spotlight on the unique ways National Jewish achieves its mission and helps take our unique approach beyond our walls."

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 120 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

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