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Starkville chiropractor and health educator Dr. Robert A. Leach (left) was honored as "Health Educator of the Year" recently by Shane McNeill, president of the Mississippi Alliance of Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance, at their 74th Annual Convention in Clinton.

Leach honored as Health Educator of the Year

For the Daily News

A Starkville chiropractic physician was recognized recently at the 74th Annual Convention of the Mississippi Alliance of Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD) in Clinton.

Dr. Robert A. Leach was honored as "Health Educator of the Year" by president Shane McNeill, who is also director of the Bureau of Coordinated School Health for the Mississippi State Department of Education.

Leach received a master of

science degree in health education from the Mississippi University for Women last year with thesis research on a potential role for youth soccer as an intervention for pediatric overweight.

Co-author in that work was Joyce M. Yates, Ed.D., coordinator of Graduate Studies in Health Education at the MUW, and the work has been submitted to a biomedical journal. In 2006-2007 Leach served as research director for MAHPERD.

Since graduation, his monthly newsletters have focused on topics beyond chiropractic

including stress management, behavior modification and exercise, and he has distributed them to chiropractic doctors for free use as a way to promote health education and public health topics throughout the state of Mississippi.

MAHPERD is a professional organization of Mississippi educators, administrators, coaches and young professionals involved in all aspects of health, physical education, recreation and dance, according to their website: <http://www.msahperd.com/newweb/>.

MAHPERD has advocated

quality programs for schools and public health measures that encourage healthy, physically active lifestyles.

Teachers, P.E. instructors, school administrators, health care professionals and laymen make up the bulk of the membership statewide.

In the past year MAHPERD has advocated for changes in public schools throughout Mississippi that have resulted in healthier food choices at school lunchrooms, and that have resulted in a new law that mandates more physical education opportunities for children throughout the state.