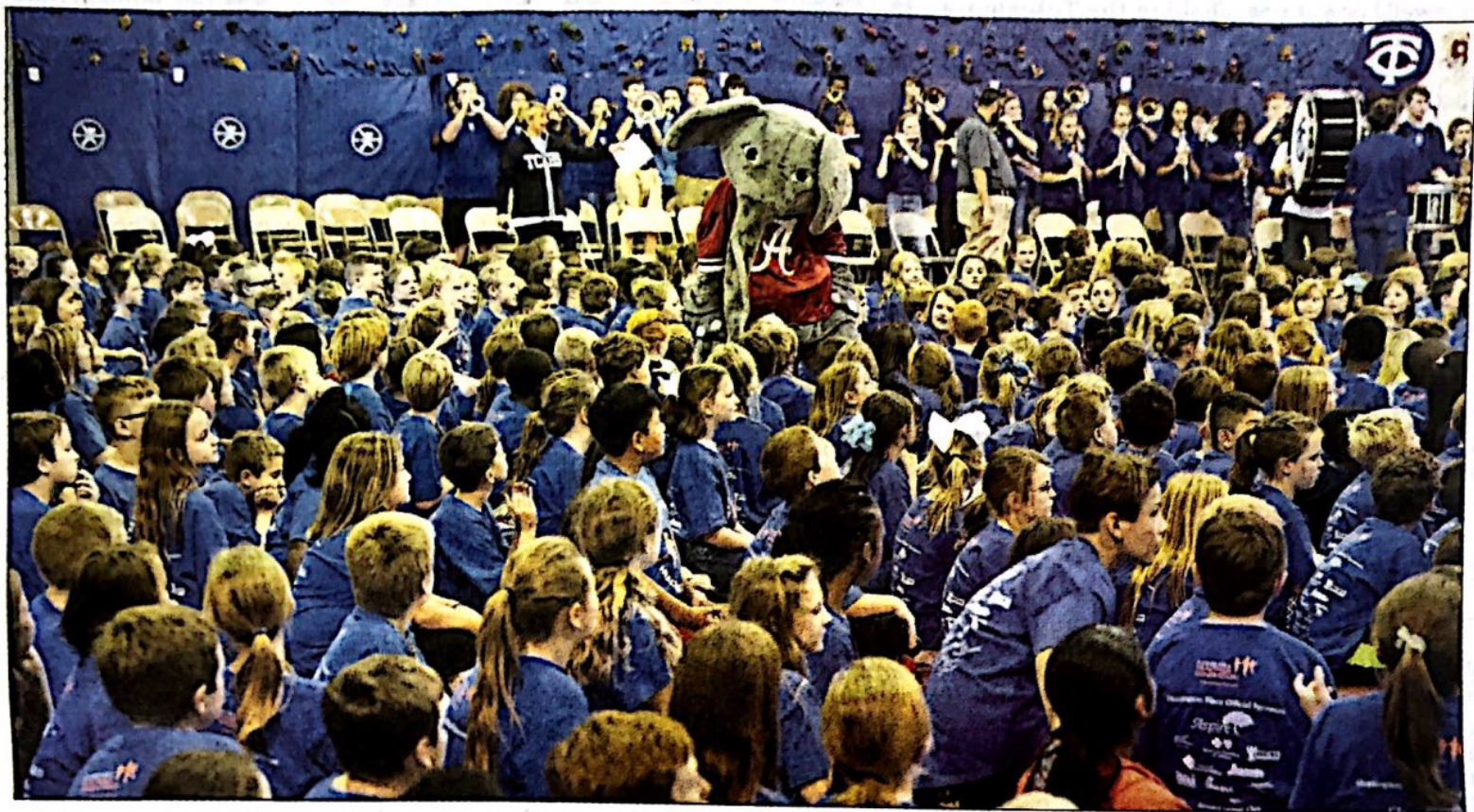# FIT TO BE HONORED

Huntington Place Elementary School celebrates its America's Healthiest School Award on Tuesday. Big Al, the Chick-fil-A cow and the Tuscaloosa County High band, cheerleaders and mascot held a pep rally to help the school celebrate. [GARY COSBY JR./STAFF PHOTO]

Huntington Place Elementary celebrates health honor

Staff report

Huntington Place Elementary School is one of four schools in Alabama to earn the America's Healthiest School Award.

On Tuesday, Huntington Elementary held a pep rally and an awards program in recognition of the award and students walked around the neighborhood after the events.

A total of 323 schools nationwide made the Alliance for a Healthier Generation list of healthiest schools. Schools that made the list were judged by a set of standards that included serving healthier meals and snacks, getting students moving more, offering high-quality physical and health education and empowering school leaders to become healthy role models.

Andrea Hamner, principal of Huntington Place Elementary School, said the Healthy Eating Active Living or HEAL curriculum played a key role in earning the recognition. HEAL started in 2007 as an experiment in one school and now serves more than 120 schools. The HEAL curriculum is provided at no cost to schools and relies on donations and grants from individuals, corporations and foundations.

"The HEAL curriculum helped Huntington Place Elementary supplement our physical education program in teaching health and fitness to our students and ensuring healthy lifestyles for the rest of their lives," Hamner said.

HEAL's founder said the group's mission is to help Alabama lead the nation for children's health and disease prevention.

"Thanks to major partners like Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, the Alabama State Department of Education, the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Walker Area Community Foundation, Alabama Power and more, we have successfully served more than 165,000 students and families over the last 10 years with significant measurable results," said Christy Swaid, founder of HEAL.

The other Alabama schools to earn the America's Healthiest School Award were Robert C. Hatch High School in Perry County, Hoover High in the Hoover City School District and Morris Slingluff Elementary School in the Dothan City School District.