



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Mark Ezzell
HWTFC
919-733-4022

May 7, 2004

FIT TOGETHER UNVEILS DETAILS OF OBESITY PREVENTION STRATEGY

(Raleigh, NC) - Fit Together, a public-private partnership between the N.C. Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, has announced details of its strategy to equip communities to address the growing overweight/obesity epidemic:

Fit Together: Equipping North Carolina's communities to combat obesity

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) has joined with the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission (HWTFC) in a partnership to combat the state's obesity epidemic. HWTFC has committed \$10.2 million to establish 20 community-based and statewide obesity prevention programs that will receive guidance and training from public health experts at Duke University Medical Center. Valuable lessons learned from these real-world laboratories will be captured by experts from ECU's Brody School of Medicine and converted into "best practices" that can provide practical guidance for civic, school and business leaders across North Carolina who are motivated to improve the health of their communities.

BCBSNC has pledged \$3 million over a three-year period to fund a comprehensive awareness campaign designed around motivating local leaders to institute community and organizational change. Advertising will seek to inspire individuals and agencies to take local action and will drive viewers to a website loaded with useful content for those desiring to affect personal and/or environmental change.

Strategy

Fit Together recognizes the limited value of health promotion efforts that focus exclusively on educating the individual about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Instead, it adopts the wisdom articulated by a statewide summit of experts who, in 2002, concluded that "comprehensive efforts to change health behavior must foster supportive policies as well as social and physical environments that encourage healthy lifestyles." Published as North Carolina's "blueprint" for fighting obesity, *Eat Smart, MoveMore...NC* calls for improving the health of our communities through policy and organizational change. The blueprint's approach was lauded by national experts, such as William H. Dietz, M.D., Ph.D., the Director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

"North Carolina is one of our nation's leaders in developing an initiative to move communities to adopt healthy eating and physical activity policy and environmental changes in an effort to prevent and combat rising trends in obesity and other chronic diseases."



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association ®Registered Mark of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



Communications Plan

The messages envisioned for the paid media campaign will seek to inspire community, school and business leaders across North Carolina to follow the examples set by model programs selected from among the 20 Fit Together grantees. Viewers will be encouraged to visit a website where lessons learned by grantees will be distilled into “best practices” that can serve as a roadmap for local implementation. Workshops will be conducted around the state, bringing community and business leaders together with public health experts who can offer guidance on successful policies and practices. Progress achieved at the local level will be measured through a formal benchmarking process, and successful communities will be recognized and rewarded.

“Call to Action” Website

In addition to “best practices” guidance for communities, individuals will have online access to a listing of opportunities for volunteer activity related to obesity prevention in their community, a diagnostic risk assessment tool sponsored jointly by the NC Academy of Family Physicians and the NC Pediatric Society, as well as a directory of local resources for nutritional guidance and physical activity including greenways, hike and bike trails, etc. These represent practical tools for use by those individuals who may be motivated to improve the health of themselves, their children and their community.

To see a map of Fit Together grantee locations, a description of grant programs and a fact sheet, click on www.fittogethernc.org.

###



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association ®Registered Mark of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association