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'Tis the Season to be Healthy

Make a Resolution to Help Yourself and Your NC Community Get Fit

Tips on healthy holidays and long-lasting healthy lifestyles

Raleigh, NC – Fit Together is offering North Carolinians healthy alternatives to overeating and too much TV watching and video game playing over the holidays.

Keeping children productively active is always a challenge for parents during holiday breaks. Fit Together is offering a practical resource that families can use to prepare healthy meals, plan activities and promote long-term ways to get fit and stay fit. Fit Together is one of the nation's most comprehensive statewide overweight/obesity prevention campaigns. Its Web site, www.FitTogetherNC.org, is full of quick tips and suggestions for making physical activity and healthy eating integral to your holiday celebrations. Now is the time also to start thinking about your New Year's resolutions and Fit Together can help while offering a **twist on the traditional**.

"Obesity and excess weight are serious challenges in North Carolina," said Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, chair of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF). "Fit Together offers practical day-to-day solutions as well as a new twist on the type of New Year's resolutions North Carolinians can make to move toward healthy lifestyles."

In addition to eating smarter and moving more this season, Fit Together urges North Carolinians to give a gift that will last for generations to come: a resolution to **improve your community's approach to healthy lifestyles**. Discover how to take action at www.FitTogetherNC.org and:

- Resolve to educate yourself on your children's activities while they're in school. **What role does P.E. play in your child's education?** Visit www.FitTogetherNC.org to find information on how some public school systems are making physical education a priority again.
- Resolve to start a **workplace wellness program**, like a walking club or healthy lunch group for you and your colleagues in '05. Go to www.FitTogetherNC.org to learn more about the variety of workplace wellness programs in North Carolina and how they're making a positive difference for both employers and employees.
- Resolve to make a difference in your community by using www.FitTogetherNC.org to find out how you can build **sidewalks, greenways and bike trails** in your community to help you, your family and your neighbors achieve a healthier lifestyle. You'll obtain a roadmap on how individuals can make changes in their cities and towns based on success stories from other North Carolina communities.

In addition to these community action ideas, www.FitTogetherNC.org also offers the following healthy solutions you can use this holiday season, found throughout Fit Together's resource-rich Web site:

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With your children home on vacation, here are some ways to keep your family active during the holidays...

- Plan family activities that provide everyone with exercise and enjoyment, like walking, dancing, biking, or indoor swimming. For example, schedule a walk or go skating with your family after a meal instead of watching TV. Make sure you plan activities that can be done in a safe environment.
- Reduce the amount of time you and your family spend in sedentary activities, such as watching TV or playing video games. If you are watching TV, think of it as an activity box. When it's on, do something – stretching exercises, weight training, sit-ups, marching in place, jump rope. Keep a hula-hoop on hand and give it a whirl during commercials.
- Play together. Join your children in a game of touch football or tag.
- Just because it's cold doesn't mean you can't be active indoors. Do laps around the mall before shopping.

Healthy eating habits for you and your family in the New Year...

- Teaching healthy eating practices early will help children approach eating with the right attitude – food should be enjoyed and is necessary for growth, development, and for energy to keep the body running.
- Plan for snacking. Some 100-calorie snack ideas: one and one-half cups frozen grapes; two plums; one-half cup of sherbet; 1 ounce of cheese; a single serving box of cereal; one-half cup berries and fat-free cookie; three cups of air-popped popcorn.
- Curb the urge to splurge. Satisfy your sweet tooth with a bite-sized piece of candy, a chocolate kiss or hard candy. If you freeze the chocolate first, it'll melt in your mouth more slowly.
- Trade plates. Use a salad plate instead of a dinner plate. It'll help you eat smaller portions.
- Go from light to heavy. Start your meal with a big salad with lots of vegetables and a low-fat or regular dressing on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing, then in the salad, to cut calories. Research shows that if you fill up on low-calorie foods first, you'll eat less of a calorie-laden entree.

Tips for surviving holiday get-togethers...

- Though the holidays are a time for traditions, don't try to do it all. Simplifying your holiday will reduce your stress. Rely on family to help with preparations.
- Remember, too much sugar will rob you of energy rather than give you more.
- Be realistic about your health goals during the holidays. Accept weight maintenance vs. weight loss.
- When it comes to holiday parties, try these strategies:
 - Snack before you go
 - Don't skip meals to compensate for a party
 - Eat slowly and savor the flavor
 - Socialize away from the buffet table, bar, or kitchen
 - Take moderate portions of specialty foods you really love
 - Bring a dish to pass that you know is healthy
 - Try spritzers or low calorie mixers, and limit use of alcohol.

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Learn more about ways to make your home, community and workplace a healthier place to be by visiting the Fit Together Web site, www.fittogethernc.org, on your computer or at your local public library. Fit Together is a three-year public-private partnership between the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC).

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is a leader in delivering innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3 million members, including approximately 540,000 served on behalf of other Blue Plans. The company offers its members the Blue ExtrasSM value-added programs, which provide discounts and information on a wide variety of health-related services at no additional cost. BCBSNC also offers life, dental, long-term care and disability insurance products. For 71 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. BCBSNC's HMO product has earned Excellent Accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care. BCBSNC also has North Carolina's first and only NCQA accredited PPO plan – Blue OptionsSM. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Access BCBSNC online at www.bcbsnc.com

About the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$55 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program for seniors. For more information, please visit www.hwtfc.org.

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