



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATCH PLANS TO HELP FIGHT OBESITY IN NEW JERSEY

Hasbrouck Heights, NJ – July 6, 2007. When CATCH® staff at Flaghouse, Inc. in Hasbrouck Heights heard that the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) planned to create an Office of Nutrition and Fitness this summer, they were in full support. The new office, aimed at preventing obesity in New Jersey, aims to improve the health of families through education, support groups and encouraging physical activity. For over fifteen years, the CATCH® program has worked towards improving the health of children across the United States and is eager to expand their program to New Jersey and support the mission of the DHSS.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, “23 percent of New Jersey residents are considered obese and another 37 percent are overweight. Excess weight puts individuals at risk for type II diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, asthma, depression, arthritis and several types of cancer.” A Rutgers University nutritionist and head of a statewide group of researchers focused on obesity, Sue Shapses, remarked that “setting up the new agency is commendable, but to succeed, it must focus on programs proven to work.

One program that has been researched and proven to work is CATCH® (Coordinated Approach To Child Health). CATCH® is an evidence based K-5 coordinated school health program that is designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices and prevent tobacco use in elementary school-aged children. The program focuses on classroom curricula, child nutrition services, physical education and family involvement. In addition to educational materials on nutrition and physical activity, the national publisher and distributor of the CATCH® Program resource materials, Flaghouse Inc., offers training, resources and grant-writing guidance.

CATCH® began as a research study funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute in 1991 to help elementary schools, children and their families adopt healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Research teams from the University of Texas-Houston, Tulane University, University of Minnesota, and the University of California, participated in what is still the largest and most rigorous school-based health promotion trial ever conducted. Today, over 5,000 schools across the United States implement the CATCH® program.

This Fall, CATCH® staff will launch their program at Jefferson Elementary School in the South Orange Maplewood school district. They will provide the school with training, equipment and curriculum, collect data and assist in tracking student progress.

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Kathy Chichester, National CATCH® Coordinator, stated, "It is the perfect time to get New Jersey schools involved in the CATCH® program. We support the Department of Health and Senior Services in its mission to fight obesity in this state and look forward to working with the staff at Jefferson Elementary. We've watched schools in other states implement the program, and it's improved children's knowledge of a healthy diet and the benefits of exercise, increased their physical activity, they've eaten more fruits and vegetables and the nutrition content of school lunches improved. The positive results are really exciting and we hope that other schools will take action to fight obesity and improve the health of their children."

If you are interested in learning more about CATCH® please visit www.CATCHinfo.org or contact Kathy Chichester at 800-793-7900, x 7518.

CATCH® (Coordinated Approach To Child Health) is an evidence-based, coordinated school health program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices and prevent tobacco use in elementary and middle school-aged children. By teaching children that eating healthy and being physically active can be fun, the CATCH Program has proven that healthy habits established in childhood can produce positive and lasting health behavior changes. For more information visit www.CATCHinfo.org.

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