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## **THE JUNIOR LEAGUES ANNOUNCE SECOND ANNUAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND NUTRITION EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

*League Members to Educate Children on Importance of Eating Well and  
Staying Healthy with Junior Leagues' Kids in the Kitchen Activities*

NEW YORK (October 17, 2006) – The Association of Junior Leagues International (AJLI) announced today that Junior Leagues across four countries – the United States, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom – will participate in the second annual education initiative on childhood obesity and nutrition, entitled Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen*. With the goal to raise awareness and help reverse the growth of childhood obesity and its associated health issues, the League-wide program will educate children and families about childhood obesity and nutrition focusing around National Nutrition Month in March 2007.

This initiative, which more than 200 Junior Leagues launched in 2006, is a response to the alarming statistic that nearly one-third of children and adolescents in the United States are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.<sup>1</sup> Even more alarming is that childhood obesity has been shown to be the leading cause of pediatric hypertension, is associated with Type II diabetes, increases the risk of coronary heart disease, increases stress on the weight-bearing joints, lowers self-esteem and affects relationships with peers.<sup>2</sup>

“With recent studies from the *International Journal of Pediatric Obesity* estimating nearly half of the children in North and South America will be overweight by 2010, *now* is the time for us to help our children learn about nutrition,” said Sandi Kemmish, president of AJLI. “Informed children have the power to turn this international childhood obesity epidemic around. The Junior Leagues are exercising our every resource through the *Kids in the Kitchen* initiative to provide these children with the tools and the motivation to really care for their bodies, their health and their future.”

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Ga.

As part of this grassroots campaign, each League will organize unique educational activities with community partners such as local chefs, grocery stores, youth service groups, schools and other organizations. Programs include cooking classes, health fairs, vegetable gardening lessons and grocery store tours to get kids involved in every stage of the preparation of their food. In addition, many programs will focus on the importance of exercise.

As children are more likely to eat foods that they helped prepare, AJLI created an online recipe collection featuring kid-friendly, nutritious recipes from celebrities, chefs and athletes. The website also features downloadable nutrition and exercise tips, quizzes to test kids on their nutritional knowledge and the USDA's MyPyramid Blast-Off game, an entertaining way for kids to learn guidelines for daily food consumption and physical activity, tailored to their nutrition and fitness needs. The *Kids in the Kitchen* website, which launched in February 2006, can be found at <http://kidsinthekitchen.ajli.org>.

Hundreds of thousands of children and their families will have the opportunity to enrich their lives and palates with recipes, tips and activities from Junior League members through the Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen* initiative. The Junior Leagues believe that education is the first step to making a lasting change in children's future.

**ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL**

*Founded in 1901 by New Yorker Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are organizations of women committed to voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Association of Junior Leagues International is made up of 293 Junior Leagues in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States. Together, they are one of the largest international volunteer organizations for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities. For more information, visit the website, [www.ajli.org](http://www.ajli.org).*

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<sup>2</sup> American Obesity Association, Washington, DC.