

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PARTNERSHIP FOR PLAY CALLS ON NATION TO INCREASE THE VOICES, SPACES AND QUALITY OF PLAY**

#### ***Senator Harkin Proposes Community Play Bill; Recent Stanford Findings Highlight Barriers To Physical Activity in Children***

WASHINGTON, DC—The Partnership for Play Every Day, a newly-founded public-private-non-profit sector collaboration, calls on all sectors of our communities to work together toward a comprehensive, action oriented response to ensure all American children engage in at least 60 minutes of play every day.

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), has joined forces with the Partnership and is sponsoring the Promoting Lifelong Active Communities Every Day or “PLAY Every Day” bill that would require federal agencies to support the development of a measurement tool to assist communities in identifying strengths and gaps in policies and programs for physical activity for children and youth. The bill would also authorize federal agencies to fund model communities of play to develop action plans that promote increased opportunities for quality play, spaces for play and voices for play.

“Unfortunately, when it comes to promoting physical activity in our communities, we’re not only stuck in neutral, we’re asleep at the wheel,” said Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA). “It’s time that we get serious and truly focus on the problem. The Play Every Day bill lays the groundwork for communities everywhere to enhance opportunities for active living. Physical activity is a key ingredient to leading a healthier lifestyle, and I believe this bill will help move the issue forward. The federal government, our schools, employers, parents and communities all have a role to play in fighting and preventing obesity and chronic disease.”

The Partnership also released a report issued by the Stanford University School of Medicine that is the most comprehensive study to date of the science related to inactivity and the barriers preventing kids from being active. The report makes several recommendations for increasing activity levels among children and youth.

The Stanford University School of Medicine report describes the lack of adequate physical activity in today’s children and adolescents; summarizes factors contributing to this lack of activity; and suggests possible strategies for reversing this trend.

“Obesity *is* a preventable disease. As a community, we need to make obesity prevention a top priority for our children’s sake,” said Rebecca Demorest, M.D., American Academy of Pediatrics.

(more)

“PepsiCo recognizes the critical importance of encouraging children to live healthy lifestyles, beginning with the products that we offer. We also want to be a part of the solution by empowering and educating children to adopt more active lifestyles,” said John Compton, CEO, PepsiCo North America. “We’re proud to join this collaborative initiative involving leaders from the public and private sector and we’re committed to teaming up on innovative solutions to help children achieve energy balance - making better choices for the calories they take in, and burning calories through physical activity.”

“The issue of fit children must be addressed from multiple angles,” said Barb King, President, Landscape Structures Inc. “Educating and motivating youth to make wise health and nutrition choices that will serve them for a lifetime is one opportunity. If we want kids to be physically active 60 minutes per day, another opportunity is wise use of the 300,000 playgrounds at elementary schools and city parks in the United States. Playgrounds are one of the most inherently active places children have at their disposal. By designing playgrounds with fitness in mind, we can ensure that our children will chose activity over inactivity, and grow stronger, happier and healthier as they play. Give children beautiful play environments with challenging play experiences and this single hour of play will stretch to two or three.”

The Partnership for Play is a newly-founded collaborative effort convened by the YMCA of the USA, National Recreation and Park Association and National Association for Sport and Physical Education. Its focus is to bring together the public, private and non-profit sectors to advance policies, programs and practices that ensure all children and youth engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

“YMCA of the USA is proud to help lead a new movement to ensure all kids get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity,” said YMCA of the USA President and CEO Neil Nicoll. “The Stanford Report clearly illustrates a pressing need to take immediate action so that our kids can live to their fullest potential. As the nation’s leading not-for-profit provider of child care, afterschool and youth sports programs, YMCAs across the country are committed to this goal and look forward to working with our colleagues in the Partnership for Play Every Day to make it happen. We commend Sen. Harkin for introducing the PLAY bill, which will help communities nationwide enhance opportunities for active living.”

“The nation’s park and recreation community is concerned about childhood obesity in America,” noted John Thorner, Executive Director of the National Recreation and Park Association, a convener of the partnership. “Instilling healthy habits for children and providing opportunities for play must become a part of the national consciousness.”

“Play is a wonderful opportunity to practice and enjoy the skills children learn in school physical education classes,” said Jackie Lund, Ph.D., President of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

The Partnership will work to convene, uplift and enhance the existing works of public, private and non-profit sector institutions engaged in efforts to improve physical activity levels among youth and to establish new streams of collaboration among stakeholder groups locally and nationally.