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Contact:

Matt Gruenburg
Burness Communications
(301) 652-1558
MGruenburg@burnesscommunications.com

Tricia Garrison
Alliance for a Healthier Generation
(857) 294 8187
Tricia.garrison@healthiergeneration.org

Matt McKenna
William J. Clinton Foundation
(212) 348-0360
press@clintonfoundation.org

Meredith Isola
American Heart Association
(301) 535-7241
meredith.isola@heart.org

43 Schools Honored at 3rd Annual Healthy Schools Forum

*Despite Economic Challenges, Schools Make Impressive Progress,
Offer Healthier Foods and More Physical Activity*

Little Rock, August 6, 2008—Former President Bill Clinton, founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation, today joined Dr. Clyde Yancy, president-elect of the American Heart Association, and James Marks, senior vice president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), at the 3rd Annual Healthy Schools Forum to honor 43 schools from around the nation for their progress in making healthier school environments for their students and staff.

“Despite the rising food prices and constrained budgets impacting programs nationally, these schools are using innovative approaches to curb the country’s alarming rates of childhood obesity,” President Clinton said. “Schools around the country are stepping up and making progress. Currently, we are helping to support nearly 3,000 schools in this effort, but there is more work to be done to continue this forward momentum.”

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Almost one in three children and teenagers in the United States are overweight or obese. In response to this epidemic, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation – a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation – established the Healthy Schools Program to help schools develop and implement policies and practices to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity. The Healthy Schools Program is supported by funding from RWJF, which has committed \$28 million to the program.

President Clinton hosted the forum at the William J. Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Ark., for the third year in a row.

Schools Report Successful Changes Despite Tough Economy

The award presenters praised school leaders for their achievements in removing unhealthy foods from cafeterias and vending machines and for finding creative ways for students to be increasingly active during the school day. Such efforts have become more difficult in the last year due to high food costs and funding cuts for physical activity programs at local, state and federal levels. Yet the schools honored today have made major strides since joining the Healthy Schools Program.

In Tampa, Fla., for example, Kenly Elementary School banished candy from its building, and students used tires and logs to build an obstacle course to tackle between classes. In Pine Hill, N.J., Pine Hill Middle School now offers a student fitness club, and the staff does yoga twice a week.

“We must continue to help schools across the country change their policies. Every student deserves a healthy start in life, and that begins with a healthy school,” said Dr. Clyde W. Yancy, M.D., FACC, FAHA, FACP, president-elect, American Heart Association, and medical director, Baylor Heart and Vascular Institute. “While rising food costs do present a challenge, we must continue to invest in our schools. Our children’s health is at stake.”

In its first two years of operation, the Healthy Schools Program has grown significantly, now reaching nearly 3,000 schools and more than 1.66 million students. Today, the Healthy Schools Program provides in-person support to 1,364 schools, up from 230 schools in 2007, and online guidance to more than 1,500 schools, up from 900 schools at the end of last year. Building on this momentum, the program aims to provide in-person support to 8,000 schools by 2010 and to reach tens of thousands more with online support. The Healthy Schools Program works with schools in all 50 states and places special emphasis on reaching those in states with the highest obesity rates, including Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee and West Virginia. Today’s honorees came from a dozen states.

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Schools Need Sustained Commitment and Resources to Continue Progress

School officials are keenly aware of the need to keep parents, public health officials, policy-makers, foundations and nonprofit organizations involved in the fight against childhood obesity. This April, RWJF brought students and staff from 24 schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program to Washington, D.C., where they educated their senators and representatives about their how schools are helping students and staff to eat well and move more, and invited them to visit their campuses to see their efforts first-hand.

“Schools are doing amazing things even with limited resources, but if we want to help them move to the next level, we need to provide the corresponding commitment and financial support,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., RWJF president and CEO. “If we continue to build on the energy that schools are generating, we can make significant improvements to our children’s health. Everyone has a role to play in reversing the childhood obesity epidemic. We can’t expect schools to shoulder the burden and work on sheer creativity and enthusiasm alone.”

Schools participating in the Healthy Schools Program are eligible to earn bronze, silver, gold or platinum awards based on their range of healthy eating and physical activity programs and policies. The rigorous program criteria were developed in consultation with a panel of experts, including representatives from the American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RWJF and others.

For further details about each award-winning school and the Healthy Schools Program’s standards for recognition, and to learn how schools can sign up to become a Healthy School, visit www.HealthierGeneration.org/schools.

The Forum program, school success stories, and photographs of representatives from recognized schools may be downloaded for media use at: <ftp://healthiergeneration.org/media>

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About The Alliance for a Healthier Generation

The American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation partnered in May 2005 to create a new generation of healthy Americans by addressing one of the nation’s leading public health threats – childhood obesity. The Alliance focuses on preventing childhood obesity and creating healthier lifestyles for all children and targets several areas to spark change and reduce the increasing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S. The effort focuses on four key areas: industry, schools, healthcare, and kids. For more information visit www.HealthierGeneration.org or www.clintonfoundation.org.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the



health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.