



For Immediate Release

## Clinton Foundation and American Heart Association form alliance to create a healthier generation

**New York, May 3** – The American Heart Association and former President Bill Clinton announced plans today to join forces to create a new generation of healthy Americans by addressing one of the nation's leading public health threats — childhood obesity. They will be joined in their efforts by Gov. Mike Huckabee (R-Ark). The initiative will focus on preventing childhood obesity and creating healthier lifestyles for children overall.

The joint alliance, launched at an event at New York City's Public School 128, aims to target several areas that the group hopes will spark change and slow the increasing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S., and encourage healthier lifestyles for young people. The effort will focus on the following three areas:

- **Industry:** Working with the food and restaurant industry to improve the quality of offerings and to develop marketing and promotion strategies to support environmental change within the industry; Convening key industry players in consumer packaged food, food service, and exercise/fitness to develop healthier eating and more exercise.
- **Schools and Community Groups:** Increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in schools across the nation; providing standards for schools to improve the food served in cafeterias and vending machines; improving opportunities for enhanced physical activity both in school and after school.
- **Community Mobilization:** Creating a campaign to engage kids in taking steps to make healthy lifestyle choices and providing tools and information to help parents incorporate heart-healthy activities into family routines, and creating tools and providing opportunities for health care providers to better recognize, prevent and treat obesity in children.
- **Media:** Exploring opportunities to work with the media to encourage healthier lifestyles for young people; activities will include using role models to promote heart healthy lifestyles among youth.

"Health security has been one of the primary missions of my Foundation since we started, and I've spent most of my life trying to help give children a better future, so I am really excited about this effort to promote healthier lifestyles for children," said President Clinton. "After my personal exposure to heart disease and surgery, I wanted to find some way to use that experience to help others. With this initiative, we can help turn young people's lives around and give them hope for a healthier future."

"I'd like to stress that this is not a short-term campaign, but a long-term commitment. The Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association are striving to achieve the same goals for American children, and have many complementary assets and abilities that will serve us well as we work together over the next decade," said American Heart Association President Alice Jacobs, M.D. "President Clinton and Governor Huckabee are natural advocates for this issue. President Clinton's passion was evident during his administration when he worked on many levels to advance the battle against heart disease and stroke. And his personal experience with heart disease drives him even further to ensure that our nation's children make wise lifestyle choices that prevent them from developing chronic diseases such as heart disease. Gov. Huckabee has been instrumental in creating policies in his state that promote healthy lifestyles and he has been an excellent personal example of what can be accomplished when one takes steps to adopt heart-healthy habits. We are honored to be working with such distinguished partners."

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"The best way to prevent heart disease in adults is to cultivate healthy lifestyle habits in children," said Governor Huckabee. "I hope that this effort will help American families, and especially children, to eat better, be more active, and live longer lives."

Today, more than twice as many children — and almost three times as many teens — are overweight as in 1980. Overweight children and adolescents have about a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight adults — increasing their risk for heart disease. If this trend continues it could cut two to five years from the average lifespan.

Robert Eckel, M.D., President-Elect of the American Heart Association, emphasized the need to engage children as advocates for their own health. "We need to go right to the source and bring kids — all kids — into the equation. This is not just about kids who are already overweight or obese. This is about helping kids of all shapes and sizes to control their health and to create lifelong habits that emphasize balance, better nutrition and increased activity."

According to Eckel, "The new 'for kids, by kids' campaign, which will launch later this year, will be a positive movement that will speak uniquely to this generation of young people. We are creating something we know will appeal to 'tweens' and other kids because we have involved them in the process of developing the campaign."

Today the American Heart Association, in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is also releasing *A NATION AT RISK: Obesity in the United States*, a statistical sourcebook of facts about obesity, including specific information on childhood obesity. The free sourcebook is now available for order by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.

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