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**Clinton Foundation, American Heart Association, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to help schools create a healthier environment for nation's students**

**New York, Feb. 13** – The Alliance for a Healthier Generation announced a new program today to collaborate with schools to help them create environments that foster healthy lifestyles and ultimately prevent overweight and obesity among students. The program is made possible by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Alliance – a joint initiative of the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association – was formed in May of 2005 to address the issues that contribute to childhood obesity and to inspire all young Americans to develop lifelong healthy habits. Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas is co-chairman of the Alliance and has provided significant leadership to create healthier schools in his state. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, awarded the Alliance an \$8 million grant to support the Healthy Schools Program.

“Every school day, 54 million young people attend nearly 123,000 schools across the country,” said President Bill Clinton. “Influencing and enhancing the ability of schools to provide healthy environments could be one of the most effective ways to shape the health, education, and well-being of our next generation.”

The Healthy Schools Program will set standards for schools, help schools meet those standards, and recognize and reward those schools that meet the standards. The standards will include: Goals to improve the nutritional value of food served in and out of cafeterias; Goals to increase physical activity during the school day and after school; Goals for implementation of classroom lessons on healthy lifestyles; and Programs for staff wellness.

Alliance experts will provide individual consultation to schools and school districts to support their efforts to meet goals of the program. They will help schools develop plans to address their individual needs, consult with school district business managers to help negotiate contracts, and meet with school boards, teacher unions, parent associations and other stakeholders to show how the program can be implemented. The Healthy Schools Program also will provide tools and materials for curricular programs on good nutrition and appropriate physical activity for children and materials to support staff wellness programs.

While any school is eligible to apply for the recognition program, in the first year the Healthy Schools Program will focus on recruiting approximately 300 schools in 13 states. The program will place special emphasis on reaching schools that have limited resources and serve students of disadvantaged socioeconomic status.

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"This program's success will be measured by how schools achieve change while at the same time balancing their other priorities," said American Heart Association President Robert Eckel, MD. "We know the realities that schools face – budget constraints and high academic expectations. But learning how to make lifestyle choices to keep you strong and healthy can be as important as a science or math lesson. There is evidence that healthier kids perform better in school, which in turn will help them perform better in life. This program will help under-resourced schools break through obstacles that are in the way of creating healthier environments for the school community."

Over the past three decades, rates of childhood obesity in the United States have more than doubled among children ages 2 to 5 and adolescents ages 12 to 19, and more than tripled among kids ages 6 to 11. Roughly nine million kids over age 6 are considered obese, and the consequences are already apparent. Children are being diagnosed with diseases previously considered "adult" illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes. "To halt the epidemic of childhood obesity, we don't need a tipping point. We need a pivot point, and school is it," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "School is where our children spend their days and where they learn habits that stay with them for life. This program has the potential to help millions of kids eat well and be more active during the school day." The Alliance has also initiated discussions with industry leaders who service the school market, including cafeteria food service providers, vending/snack food manufacturers, and sporting goods equipment companies. That dialogue will continue in the hopes of fostering cooperative relationships that will benefit schools and students.

"I've seen with my own eyes what a difference it makes when you make health and wellness a priority in schools," said Governor Huckabee. "The Healthy Schools Program will ensure that kids from all walks of life are on equal footing when it comes to learning about healthy behaviors. "

Applications for the program will be available beginning July 1, 2006 at [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org) or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.

#### **About The Alliance for a Healthier Generation**

The Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association 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.

The Alliance targets several areas that 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 four key areas: industry, schools, healthcare professionals and kids. For more information visit [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.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 30 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](http://www.rwjf.org).

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