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Franklin County Commissioners Join National Effort to Combat Childhood Obesity with Launch of *Let's Move, Franklin County*

With inactivity and obesity continuing to put Central Ohio children at higher risks for chronic health and physical problems, Franklin County Commissioners are joining a growing chorus of county officials across the nation championing the national *Let's Move!* initiative launched by First Lady Michelle Obama.

Franklin County is the first county in Ohio to pledge to the *Let's Move! Cities, Townships and Counties* - a comprehensive initiative by the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities dedicated to solving the problem of childhood obesity within a generation.

With *Let's Move, Franklin County*, Commissioners hope to further build upon the County's significant investments in promoting healthy living and lifestyle choices for children and teens, including county-sponsored summer camps, health screenings, and neighborhood nutritional outreach.

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled. Nationally, nearly one in every three children or teenagers is overweight or obese. The numbers are even higher in African American and Hispanic communities, where nearly 40 percent of young people are considered overweight.

"Good health and physical activity are essential for all children and for the adults and workers they will become," said County Commissioner President Paula Brooks. "Childhood obesity is preventable but only if we work together as a community to change our children's lives and help them learn and grow and fulfill every last bit of their potential."

"*Let's Move!* is about putting our children on the path to a healthy future, starting when they're young," said County Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "Healthy youngsters grow up to be healthy adults, and a lifelong commitment to fitness is an essential part of reducing heart disease, diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer, and many other diseases and illnesses."

"We are joining with hundreds of local leaders across the country who are taking steps to prevent childhood obesity and make their communities healthier for everyone," added Commissioner John O'Grady. "But government cannot do it alone. Everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity, including parents, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, private sector companies and elected officials from all levels of government."

On Tuesday, County Commissioners proclaimed the month of September as Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and launched a series of efforts aimed at empowering kids and their families to discover the fun in healthy eating and exercise.

Let's Move, Franklin County will feature a new website (www.FranklinCountyOhio.gov/LetsMove) with information and resources for every cross section of the county. A social media component will also encourage followers to track #LetsMoveFranklinCo on Twitter.

Over the coming year, Franklin County will target additional *Let's Move!* tips and information to all childcare providers licensed in the county and all county-supported afterschool care providers.

Commissioners will encourage county agencies to review the contracts of all food vendors working at county-run venues to identify opportunities to promote healthy and sustainable food service guidelines.

And county workers will join in the *Let's Move!* effort. Through the County's health and wellness program, employees will see more programming aimed at increasing physical activity and healthy eating - including additional health screenings, walking clubs, and nutrition advice.

Franklin County has already enlisted its first partner. The YMCA of Central Ohio receives significant funding from the County to promote healthy living for children and teens, including county support of annual summer camps.

"As a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y is dedicated to helping fight childhood obesity and to improving the health of children in the central Ohio community," said Andrew Roberts, President of the YMCA of Central Ohio. "By supporting the new healthy standards of the *Let's Move!* initiative, the Y is helping to reduce rising health care costs, and more importantly helping our children live longer and healthier lives."

Let's Move, Franklin County is the latest program launched under the County Commissioners' "Investing in our Next Generation" initiative, a year-long examination of the estimated \$343 million in investments that County agencies will make in youth and child-oriented programs in 2012, and how these agencies and programs can work better together to increase their impact on Franklin County's young people.

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