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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **John Rex Endowment Commits Long-Term Funding to Healthy Weight Initiative for Children**

#### ***Schools, Communities and Medical Teams Awarded Grants to Initiate Behavioral Changes and Create an Environment to Encourage Healthy Choices and Active Lifestyle***

**RALEIGH, N.C.** (May 3, 2007) – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the growing obesity epidemic is one of the nation’s most pressing public health issues. In the initial phase of a long-term commitment to a Childhood Obesity Initiative, the John Rex Endowment has dedicated \$2.5 million to combat childhood obesity. New grant recipients include 15 schools, five neighborhood projects, and additional funding for the expansion of a pediatric pre-diabetes screening program.

In the face of the alarming number of seriously overweight children, which has nearly tripled in North Carolina in the last two decades, the John Rex Endowment set a new priority in 2006 to determine the best way to use its resources to promote healthy weight in Wake County’s children.

“We recognize the community must work together to change an existing environment that promotes unhealthy food choices and a sedentary lifestyle,” said Kevin Cain, president and CEO of the John Rex Endowment. “Schools, families, communities, neighborhoods, policy makers, health care leaders and many others have critical roles to play. Although the basic solution may seem simple – to ensure children engage in more physical activity and eat healthier foods – those behavioral changes depend on long-term, coordinated and multi-pronged efforts and collaboration with multiple partners. We are committed to addressing this health concern by providing resources to initiate innovative programs and community-wide solutions.”

With an emphasis on employing proven models and strategies to effectively address the challenge of childhood obesity, the John Rex Endowment selected expert partners, including the Physical Activity Nutrition Branch of the N.C. Division of Public Health and the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to assist with selection, oversee grants and be actively involved through the duration of the grant programs.

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The John Rex Endowment awarded the following grants through a competitive application process:

- **\$480,000** awarded as a second grant to support the **WakeMed Pediatric Diabetes Program**, led by Mark Piehl, MD. The additional grant funds will enable WakeMed to accommodate the increasing number of children referred to the program while providing continuity of care. The grant program includes the expansion of ENERGIIZE!, a program dedicated to helping children ages 6 to 18 reduce the risk of developing diabetes, and the addition of Drive 2 Fitness, a community and school-based Fitness Forward program focused on educating and rewarding fitness and health among youth. Funds will also be used to increase the number of pre-diabetes screenings in Wake County Public Schools and physician offices.
- **\$600,000** total for five Eat Smart, Move More NC Active Community and Neighborhood Grants awarded to the **North Carolina Museum of Art**, the **Town of Cary**, the **Town of Holly Springs**, **Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church**, and **Triangle Transit Authority**, with a focus on increasing access and reducing barriers to opportunities for active living. The grants will be administered by the N.C. Public Health Foundation and the Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch of the N.C. Division of Public Health.
- **15 Wake County Public School System elementary schools** will receive a **total of \$450,000 (\$10,000 per school annually for three years)** from the John Rex Endowment as part of The Wake to Wellness Grants Program to support the development of programs that create healthier school environments. An **additional \$450,000** will be awarded to 15 schools in 2008. The Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will oversee the grants and actively assist participating schools.

Additional information about each specific grant project is available upon request at 919.571.3392.

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### **John Rex Endowment**

*The John Rex Endowment invests in the development and support of activities, programs and organizations that improve the health of underserved people in Wake and surrounding counties. Currently, the Endowment supports visible and measurable improvements in the health of children by improving access to health services, by promoting healthy behaviors and by providing children with opportunities for growth and development. For more information, visit [www.rexendowment.org](http://www.rexendowment.org).*



**Wake to Wellness Grant Recipients**  
 May 2007- May 2010

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*The Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will be responsible for the administration of these grant funds, provided by the John Rex Endowment. The Wake to Wellness Grant Program will provide funding the following 15 Wake County Public School System elementary schools to improve physical activity policies and programs. Projects will be consistent with eight components of the coordinated school health model outlined in the Healthy Active Children Policy of the North Carolina State Board of Education, with emphasis on Physical Education, Recess and Physical Activity.*

**Wake To Wellness: Elementary School Funding (\$10,000 per year for each over three years)**

Baucom	Comprehensive Wellness Trail; nutrition education and fitness stations
Cedar Fork	Track with soccer goals, recess packs and teacher training in group games
Conn Magnet	Active learning playground
Lincoln Heights	Comprehensive Wellness program with students and community, after school fitness club, Healthy Living Education nights, Wellness library, Healthy Living teacher funding
Olds	Physical fitness education and training program, playground improvements, physical activity program implementation
Penny Road	More opportunities for physical education and health, new health and nutrition curriculum, wellness program for staff and community
Vance	Get Healthy, Stay Healthy program: chef session, healthy snack bowls, fitness equipment and videos
Baileywick	Recess toolkits, educational materials for teachers, in-service for parents/students, workshops for teachers, students, parents
Farmington Woods	Goal-oriented fitness assessment, exercise laboratory, 15-a-day program, use of physical activity and food pyramids
Middle Creek	Structured walking program
Morrisville	Increasing physical activity during and outside of school day, integrate lessons on health and nutrition into core subjects.
Olive Chapel	Walking school bus, WAY curriculum, recess kits, healthier food options, nutrition seminars, community wellness opportunities
Washington	Outdoor and indoor equipment, new before/after school programs, energizers, mileage club, jump rope club, ballroom dance club, climbing wall, staff development on new school additions
Yates Mill	Staff development for all classroom teachers, Drive 2 Fitness Training, climbing wall, equipment and modules sets for PE department, track area, recess kits, energizers
Zebulon	Drive 2 Fitness, after-school clubs for physical activity, equipment for classroom and playground, exercise DVDs, walking logs and incentives, heart rate monitors, Poe Center field trips, cafeteria contests, newsletter nutrition and fitness info, health fair, walking club, staff trainings



## **Active Community and Neighborhood Grant Recipients May 2007- May 2010**

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*The Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch in the N.C. Division of Public Health and the N.C. Public Health Foundation will be responsible for the administration of grant funds, provided by the John Rex Endowment. The Active Community and Neighborhood Grant Program will provide \$120,000 to each of the following five local communities in Wake County to increasing physical activity in community settings for children, youth and their families by creating partnerships to increase access and reduce barriers to opportunities for active living. They will use the 5 Ps approach developed by Active Living by Design or adopt strategies that conform with recommendations of the North Carolina Health and Human Services Healthy Weight Initiative.*

### **Gethsemane SDA Church**

This project builds on existing neighborhood assets to increase physical activity. It consists of renovating a playground at Gethsemane Seventh Day Adventist Church and constructing a walking trail with physical activity messages to connect the playground and Southeast Raleigh community garden to the Sanderford Road Park and surrounding neighborhood.

### **The North Carolina Museum of Art**

The North Carolina Museum of Art will commission site-specific art projects encouraging visitors of all ages and physical abilities to actively explore the Museum Park. The Center for Universal Design will focus on Park accessibility for all mobility levels, surveying trail usability; developing solutions for remediation.

### **Town of Cary**

This project will utilize Fred G. Bond Metro Park (Bond Park) for a sidewalk and greenway enhancement intervention. This intervention will result in the construction of walkways to better connect facilities to trails and greenways, installation of signage to ease navigation and implementation of walking programs. This funding will enable the construction of more than 845 feet of concrete sidewalks and asphalt trails and physical activity programs. This intervention will ensure Bond Park is a safe and convenient place for walking and physical activity.

### **Town of Holly Springs**

This project is a joint effort of both the Engineering Department and Parks and Recreation Department of the Town of Holly Springs. In addition to town departments, the project will benefit Wake County's Holly Springs Elementary School, with whom the Parks and Recreation department has a joint-use agreement for Jones Park. This project will provide 4524' of greenway, 1300' of sidewalk and three crosswalks; providing people powered multi-use access for recreation in the heart of downtown. The connection of Jones Park, Holly Springs Elementary, Veteran's Park and linkage to existing sidewalks provides a contiguous 6 miles of sidewalk and greenway.

### **Triangle Transit Authority**

This project is a joint effort by the Triangle Transit Authority (TTA), Capital Area Metropolitan Area Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the City of Raleigh to develop and implement a plan to site improved bike and pedestrian amenities at bus stops. These amenities will improve the physical environment and increase the activity levels and transit use of local citizens. A best practices guidance document for municipalities to address future community needs around transit stops will be created.