



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CATCH® PROGRAM LAUNCHES AT JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MAPLEWOOD, NJ

Hasbrouck Heights, NJ – November 10, 2007. On September 5, over 60 Maplewood school district physical education teachers, classroom staff, and local YMCA personnel joined together at Jefferson Elementary School in Maplewood for a training in the CATCH® program.

CATCH® (Coordinated Approach To Child Health) is an evidence based K-5 coordinated school health program that is designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices and prevent tobacco use in elementary school-aged children. The program focuses on classroom curricula, child nutrition services, physical education and family involvement. In addition to educational materials on nutrition and physical activity, the national publisher and distributor of the CATCH® program resource materials, Flaghouse Inc., offers training, resources and grant-writing guidance.

CATCH® began as a research study funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute in 1991 to help elementary schools, children and their families adopt healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Research teams from the University of Texas-Houston, Tulane University, University of Minnesota, and the University of California, participated in what is still the largest and most rigorous school-based health promotion trial ever conducted. Today, over 5,000 schools across the United States implement the CATCH® program.

CATCH implements hundreds of trainings during the year in schools throughout the country. The training at Jefferson Elementary School launches the first training in a New Jersey school. According to a 2006 study by the New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services, "38 percent of New Jersey residents are overweight and 22% are obese." Excess weight puts individuals at risk for type II diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, asthma, depression, arthritis and several types of cancer. The CATCH® program aims to fight obesity and related illnesses by educating children on the benefits of healthy eating and participating in physical activity at an early age.

Kathy Chichester, the National CATCH® Coordinator, was one of five CATCH representatives to attend the training. Chichester remarked, "We are excited to launch the CATCH® program in New Jersey. The training is an interactive, hands-on workshop which blends the knowledge and practical skills necessary to implement the four CATCH components - classroom curricula, food service modifications, physical education and family involvement. By implementing CATCH® in schools, we are making a positive impact on children's health, whether they are in the classroom, in the cafeteria, in PE or at home with their families."

As a result of training, participants will become familiar with the CATCH® program and all of its components, identify how CATCH® improves the health of children, learn how to effectively utilize implementation strategies and instructional best practices, and discover how they can help support the program in their schools. In addition, training is tailored to the specific needs of a school or organization. It also includes instruction in the use of various evaluation tools that can help assess program implementation and effectiveness. The cost for CATCH® training will vary depending on trainer availability, location, the number of participants and schedule.

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Judy LoBianco, Supervisor of Health and Physical Education for the South Orange-Maplewood School District, attended the training along with classroom and physical education staff within her district. She remarked, "When I first decided to bring CATCH® to the district, I did so because it is the only program that I saw that offered so many facets of a Coordinated School Health Program. When our staff at Jefferson was trained, it was a day for people to come together in ways in which they had never done before, sharing the one common goal that everyone always agrees on: healthy, active children. Everyone felt that they came away with something for themselves, their families and their students. The result is a culture and climate of health and wellness for Jefferson School. It is a program that has been enthusiastically embraced and it has brought together all the stakeholders in child health - from community members to parents, administrators, cafeteria workers, teachers and students. Together, Jefferson's school community is successfully modeling for and teaching children the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle."

The CATCH® program has already become so successful at Jefferson, that LoBianco recently purchased CATCH K-5 Physical Education kits for all of her other elementary schools. She is passionate about spreading the CATCH® program throughout her school district and confident in the positive results to come. CATCH® will assist Jefferson Elementary School in tracking the and measuring the progress of the program as it expands. In only two short months after the training, LoBianco states that there are already positive changes happening at the school. "We measure success with a child that decides to try a new fruit or vegetable. We measure success with the parents who decided to do a walk-a-thon as a PTA activity that supports the goals and objectives of CATCH®. We measure success with the teachers who decided to dress up as "GO," or healthy food, on Halloween. Healthy children are better learners and at Jefferson we are working together to make that happen."

If you are interested in learning more about CATCH, visit www.CATCHinfo.org, or contact Kathy Chichester at 800-793-7900, x 7518.

CATCH® (Coordinated Approach To Child Health) is an evidence-based, coordinated school health program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices and prevent tobacco use in elementary and middle school-aged children. By teaching children that eating healthy and being physically active can be fun, the CATCH Program has proven that healthy habits established in childhood can produce positive and lasting health behavior changes. For more information visit www.CATCHinfo.org.

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