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**Media representatives who are interested in following this project or scheduling photo opportunities are invited to call Jerry Jones at the Martin Luther King Center to schedule a visit.**

**Quad City Health Initiative and Martin Luther King Center Develop Healthy After School Project**

The Quad City Health Initiative Wellness Champions are partnering with the City of Rock Island Martin Luther King Center to develop and pilot a Healthy After School project during the 2007-2008 school year. The project is focused on improving the nutritional content of meals served and encouraging at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day for children ages 5-11 who attend the Martin Luther King Center's after school program. Leveraging volunteer resources from across the community, organizers hope to create a model project that can be replicated at other sites.

The pilot project began last September with an assessment of meals provided at the King Center. Local dietitians affiliated with Hy-Vee reviewed and made recommendations to improve the food options served. "This was a critical first step," says Jerry Jones, Director of the Martin Luther King Center, "since many of our kids eat their main evening meal while at the King Center. We wanted to make sure we were providing the kids with wholesome and nutritious food that would model good eating habits."

With the assistance of nursing staff and exercise specialists from Genesis Health System and the Trinity Visiting Nurse and Homecare Association, baseline health measurements were also taken in September. These included measurements of the children's body-mass index, balance, flexibility and endurance. Three additional measurement points were established including a final set of measurements to be taken in May 2008. The data will be analyzed by the Genesis Health System Biostatistics Group and findings will be shared with the community.

Volunteers from the Wellness Champions are assisting King Center staff with planning and implementing daily physical activity programming. “We’re making an effort to introduce the kids to different types of physical activity,” says Nicole Carkner, Quad City Health Initiative, “because we want each child to have the chance to find a physical activity that they enjoy and may continue doing for life.” The team hopes to introduce activities such as yoga, golf, tae kwon do, dance and karate among already popular activities such as running, basketball and jump rope.

Ultimately, the Quad City Health Initiative plans to use the findings from this pilot project to guide other after school programs in developing similar wellness programming for kids.

In QCHI’s 2002 Community Health Assessment, obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol (all risk factors for cardiovascular disease) emerged as critical issues for the health of our region. The 2007 Community Vitality Scan indicated that 23.6% of Quad City children ages 6-12 are overweight. Since December 2002, the Wellness Champions team has been working to reverse these trends by promoting daily exercise, nutrition and regular screenings for health risk factors. The Wellness Champions team includes about 65 individual representatives from 52 organizations across the Quad City community.

The Quad City Health Initiative (QCHI) is a community partnership in active pursuit of a healthier community. The Initiative seeks to be a catalyst for improving the health and overall quality of life within the Quad City community. The Initiative raises awareness of health issues, encourages or creates projects to address gaps in health services and fosters community collaboration in all aspects of health. Genesis Health System and Trinity Regional Health System are major financial sponsors of the Initiative. Additional financial support is provided in 2008 by Alcoa. For more information or to join the efforts of the Quad City Health Initiative, please call 563-421-2826 or visit our website at [www.qchealthinitiative.org](http://www.qchealthinitiative.org).