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## **JUNIOR LEAGUE OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD ANNOUNCES THIRD ANNUAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND NUTRITION EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

*More Than 230 Leagues Unite to Educate Children on Importance of Eating Well and Staying Healthy as Part of Junior Leagues' Kids in the Kitchen Activities*

Springfield, MA – The Junior League of Greater Springfield, Inc. will participate in the third annual education initiative on childhood obesity and nutrition, titled Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen*, along with more than 230 Leagues from The Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. (AJLI). With the goal to raise awareness and help reverse the growth of childhood obesity and its associated health issues, the Junior League of Greater Springfield will teach children in the Springfield R.E.A.C.H. program how to prepare nutritious foods and maintain healthy eating habits. The session will take place at the Springfield Boys and Girls Club on Wednesday, May 7, 2008 at 3:30 p.m. and will be taught by Elaine Berardi, MS, RD, LDN, a registered dietitian/chef at Kindred Park View Hospital in Springfield, MA. She will be joined by her assistant, Judy Mason, MA, RD, LDN. The program includes instructions on reading nutrition labels, guidelines on proper serving sizes and information on the food groups. Local sponsors of *Kids in the Kitchen* include: Costco Wholesale, Big Y, Interproduce and Kindred Park View Hospital.

Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen*, which launched in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom in 2006, addresses the staggering statistic that nearly one-third of children and adolescents in North and South America will be overweight by 2010 and at increased risk of contracting Type II diabetes, high blood pressure, the numerous ailments related to high cholesterol and social problems that affect self-esteem.

Leagues across four countries will continue to involve kids in hands-on activities related to preparation of their own meals and snacks, based on information that shows that kids who help with shopping and meal preparation are more likely to eat healthy foods. Junior Leagues also offer a comprehensive website with materials that interest both kids and parents. An online recipe collection features downloadable kid-friendly, nutritious recipes from celebrities, chefs and athletes, as well as an educational interactive game

provided by Cartoon Network, the exclusive kids' media partner of *Kids in the Kitchen*. Kids and their parents can also access downloadable nutrition and exercise tips, quizzes to test kids on their nutritional knowledge and the USDA's MyPyramid Blast-Off game, an entertaining way for kids to learn guidelines for daily food consumption and physical activity, tailored to their nutrition and fitness needs. The *Kids in the Kitchen* website can be found at <http://kidsinthekitchen.ajli.org>.

Motivated by recent studies out of Harvard, Rutgers and the University of Minnesota indicating that family dining improves the dietary habits of children, this year's program will also promote family meal activities and provide facts on the benefits of family dining.

Hundreds of thousands of children and their families will continue to have the opportunity to enrich their lives and palates with recipes, tips and activities from Junior League members through the *Kids in the Kitchen* initiative. The Junior Leagues believe that education and hands-on involvement in healthy meal preparation are the first steps to making a lasting change in our children's future.

#### **ABOUT THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD, INC.**

The JLGS is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. This year's community projects include the JLGS Financial Literacy Project, "Kids in the Kitchen," a nationwide initiative to address childhood obesity and nutrition, the JLGS Read Aloud at Edward P. Boland School, the Annual JL Scholarship, and numerous smaller "Done in a Day" events. Some of these projects include clothing drives, food drives, book drives, as well participating in the United Way's "Day of Caring," and meeting the needs of the community at the Ronald McDonald House, the Gray House and the Cancer House of Hope.

The Junior League of Greater Springfield is comprised of women who are committed to making a difference in their community and invites all women 21 years of age and over to learn more about the Junior League by calling the office at 413-781-2545 or by visiting the Junior League's website at: [www.jlgs.org](http://www.jlgs.org).

#### **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL**

*Founded in 1901 by New Yorker Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are organizations of women committed to voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Association of Junior Leagues International is made up of 293 Junior Leagues in the United States, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Together, they are one of the largest international volunteer organizations for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities. For more information, visit the website, [www.ajli.org](http://www.ajli.org).*

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