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National Leaders Step Up to Support Healthier Kids *Mrs. Laura Bush serves as Honorary Chair for Innovative Wellness Event*

Washington, DC, *October 5, 2006* – Leaders in education and health, along with athletes, students and government dignitaries, gather on the National Mall today for the first national *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge* – a celebration event to promote the importance of school wellness practices to improve the health and learning of students nationwide.

Co-hosted by Action for Healthy Kids and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the *Game On!* event aims to bring national focus to the need for improving nutrition and physical activity for children, youth, and schools. Mrs. Laura Bush serves as Honorary Chair of *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge*.

“Action for Healthy Kids is committed to forming strong partnerships to benefit kids,” says Alicia Moag-Stahlberg, MS, RD, executive director of Action for Healthy Kids. “Coming together to share resources, energy, and knowledge is the best way to bring about real change – the kind of social change that is crucial to preventing childhood overweight and obesity for the next generation.”

More than 200 middle school students from DC-area schools will convene on the National Mall to take *The Ultimate Wellness Challenge*, which integrates learning about healthy eating and daily physical activity through a fun, non-competitive activity course.

To kick off the event, Alex M. Azar II, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Acting Surgeon General, Kenneth P. Moritsugu, MD, MPH, address the priority of promoting sound nutrition and quality physical activity in schools in order to ensure that all students are equipped to reach their potential in the classroom and in every aspect of their lives. This national *Game On!* event

demonstrates that collaboration among public and private sectors and true dedication of educators and mentors of children at all levels is a key strategy for bringing about meaningful and lasting improvements that are crucial for the health of American youth.

With childhood obesity rates at epidemic proportions, the role for schools to promote healthy eating and daily physical activity for all students intensifies. Federal legislation now mandates most schools to have local wellness policies that include nutrition guidelines for all foods sold at school, goals for nutrition education and physical activity, along with a plan for carrying out policy. Action for Healthy Kids, a national grassroots partnership leading the *Campaign for School Wellness*, has joined forces with HHS to motivate families, school staff and administrators, community leaders and students to support school wellness efforts. With the expertise of public and private partners, Action for Healthy Kids and HHS created *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge* as a turnkey program that, in its pilot year, has reached more than 600 schools and communities in all states. This creative program is an example of the benefit of collaborations that unite government, the private sector, communities, families, and schools.

For more information on *Game On! The Ultimate Wellness Challenge*, visit www.ActionForHealthyKids.org.

About Action for Healthy Kids

Action for Healthy Kids is a national grassroots partnership created to address the epidemic of overweight, undernourished and sedentary youth by focusing on changes at school. *Action for Healthy Kids* is a public-private partnership of more than 50 national organizations and government agencies representing education, health, fitness and nutrition, which supports the efforts of its Teams (including all states and the District of Columbia) made up of over 6,000 volunteers.

Action for Healthy Kids was created in response to *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, which identified the school environment as one of five key sites of change. Former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, is the founding chair of *Action for Healthy Kids*.

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