

PRESS RELEASE

Jersey City Free Public Library
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***JC LIBRARY PRESENTS KICK OFF OF THE 'FIT FOR LIFE' PROJECT:
A \$15,000 GRANT GIVING FREE NUTRITION & EXERCISE PROGRAMS TO
'TWEENS, TEENS & FAMILIES***

JERSEY CITY, NJ March 2, 2007 – The *Jersey City Free Public Library* proudly invites all Jersey City 'tweens, teens and parents to the **Saturday, March 24th Kick Off** of the *Fit for Life* project, a **FREE** fitness and exercise program entitled, the *Food Face-Off Challenge*, in fighting obesity.

Fit for Life is a library-based program for children, aged 11 and up, and their families, promoting physical fitness and healthy eating. This **\$15,000 grant** awarded to the Jersey City Free Public Library involves community-based organizations and individuals in programs that present good health practices in eating and exercising to 'tweens, adolescents and their families in Jersey City, which will include exercise programs, diabetes education and literacy tutor education in health-related issues. **Jersey City is only one of 14 libraries within the U.S. to receive this competitive grant.**

Two library sites, accommodating different parts of Jersey City, will host the Kick Off:

Main Library, 472 Jersey Avenue – 10 a.m. to Noon, 4th Floor

The Miller Branch, 489 Bergen Avenue – 2 to 4 p.m., Auditorium

Fit for Life is sponsored by Libraries for the Future, the program division of Americans for Libraries Council, a national nonprofit that champions the role of libraries in American life and promotes new approaches to sustaining and developing libraries in the 21st century, and MetLife Foundation, which was established by MetLife to carry on its tradition of corporation contributions and programs.

The Jersey City Free Public Library presents the *Food Face-Off Challenge*, in conjunction with these five participating organizations: Family Support Organization of Hudson County, Boys & Girls Clubs of Hudson County, Jersey City Library Literacy Program, Horizon Health Center, and Soul of Fitness. The *Food Face-Off Challenge* encourages individuals and families to face up to their poor eating habits, through education about better food choices and the benefits of exercise...*and that exercise can be a whole lot of fun!*

(more)

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"We are very pleased to secure such an esteemed national grant that helps our library patrons in Jersey City develop good health habits," said Library Director Priscilla Gardner.

"The grant emphasizes that, instead of 'googling', use the Library as your 'go-to' place for health information. We can help you find the information you need, and in a confidential manner," added Miller Branch Manager Reneé Moody, who, as grant coordinator, is overseeing grant outreach and implementation. Public Information Officer Michele Dupey wrote the *Fit for Life* grant, which was awarded in September 2006.

Obesity is an eating disorder, identified by too much weight gain for a person's body (30+ BMI), that permeates the general population, creating an ever-larger citizenry, and documented to affect children and teens at an increasingly alarming rate, with related health problems, such as Type 2 diabetes, following in its wake.

Some Statistics: (NJ Obesity Prevention Action Plan – Jon S. Corzine, Governor / Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D., Commissioner, NJ Dept. of Health & Senior Services / June 2006)

- ☞ NJ spent **\$2.3 billion** in 2003 for medical expenses in treatment for obesity-related diseases – **half of cost** borne by taxpayers through Medicare & Medicaid
- ☞ NJ inpatient & outpatient obesity health care costs are increasing at an alarming rate of **36 %** every year & prescription costs for obesity-related illnesses are climbing annually at a rate of **77%**
- ☞ More than half of ALL NJ adults are obese or overweight
- ☞ **Less than 40%** of NJ adults participate or engage in frequent physical activity
- ☞ **Less than 30%** of NJ adults eat 5 daily servings of fruits & vegetables (including legumes)
- ☞ NJ has the highest rate of obesity in low-income children, aged 2-5 years, in the U.S.
- ☞ Statistics on overweight school-aged NJ children & adolescents have not been readily available, & are urgently needed

Did you know...?

- ☞ Fat people are often disregarded and subjected to ridicule.¹
- ☞ Obese adolescents have feelings of low self-esteem, social isolation, feelings of rejection and depression and a strong sense of failure.²
- ☞ Social attitudes towards obesity are negative and usually result in the adolescent becoming withdrawn and isolated.³
- ☞ In studies conducted it was also found that obese adolescents generally were taller, had advanced bone age and had entered puberty earlier than non-obese adolescents.⁴
- ☞ Obesity is an eating disorder identified by too much weight gain for a person's body (as computed in the BMI – **Body Mass Index = Kg/m²** – weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared) (Overweight = 25 BMI / Obese = 30+ BMI / Morbidly Obese = 40+ BMI)
- ☞ Creating an ever-larger general population, obesity is now documented to affect children and teens at an increasingly alarming rate, with related health problems, such as Type 2 diabetes, following in its wake.

ATTACHED: *Fit for Life* Program Descriptions

¹ Adolescent Obesity, Lynn Marmitt, Yale University

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid