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**ST. JOSEPH HEALTH SYSTEM FIGHTS CHILDHOOD OBESITY WITH NEW
“HEALTHY FOR LIFE” PROGRAM**

**Collaboration with American Academy of Pediatrics Officially Debuts Feb. 17th
Representing Major Change in How Schools Teach Fitness and Nutrition**

ORANGE, Calif. (Feb. 3, 2009) - - With the alarming trend of childhood obesity growing across the nation, California-based **St. Joseph Health System** (SJHS) is partnering with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to fight this troubling issue with the development of a new comprehensive program, **Healthy For Life** that focuses on at-risk student populations. This innovative program will be unveiled on **Tuesday, February 17th at 10 a.m. at Century High School** (1401 S. Grand Ave.) in Santa Ana with more than **200 students who participate in the Healthy For Life program** joined by local school district officials, elected officials, health industry professionals and St. Joseph Health System. It will feature demonstrations of elements from the curriculum including a kickboxing exhibition and weight training techniques. Healthy for Life focuses on getting students and their families to develop healthy lifestyle choices by incorporating both physical activity and a responsible diet.

Students in more than 47 Orange County schools participate in this free, curriculum-based physical education program that instills the importance of fitness and nutrition to obtain optimum and long-lasting healthy results. A physician and dietician from one of the SJHS hospitals go to each participating school to help educate the students.

St. Joseph Health System has also partnered with nationally renowned Chefs Jaime Martín del Campo and Ramiro Arvizu, owners of the award-winning restaurant La Casita Mexicana and recently seen on the *Today* show and *Throwdown with Bobby Flay*. Natives of Jalisco, México, the Chefs will develop recipes of authentic Mexican food that are healthy, easy, quick and affordable using an array of flavors and spices. Martín del Campo and Arvizu will also provide cooking demonstrations throughout the year for parents and students to help provide healthy eating tips to incorporate into their lifestyle. **Chefs Martín del Campo and Arvizu be on hand at the February 17th event to discuss and demonstrate healthy alternative cooking options.**

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“As a Catholic health system, we want to ensure that the communities we serve are among the healthiest and that can’t be accomplished if the youth of our communities are facing obesity rates at epidemic levels,” states Deborah Proctor, President and CEO of St. Joseph Health System. “In creating our new Healthy For Life campaign we wanted to ensure that we are providing real, usable tools that will not just benefit the students but will also help the families as a whole make the right healthy choices. This will assist them avoid more serious health issues down the road.”

The program represents a cultural change in school systems and in the homes of local families, teaching a combination of both exercise and healthy eating thus providing lifelong lessons for fitness and nutrition. Dr. Azhar Qureshi, St. Joseph Health System Senior Vice President of Community Health, states, “Our approach is a drastic departure from standard physical education because it identifies necessary lifestyle changes that must occur to truly address the epidemic rates of diabetes and childhood obesity. Healthy For Life is designed to help reduce these health issues in communities with high risk populations and it is our hope that it will become a successful prototype for other communities across the nation to help tackle these systemic health issues as well.”

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control highlight the need for programs such as “Healthy For Life”:

- The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, going from 6.5% in 1980 to 17.0% in 2006. The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 more than tripled, increasing from 5% to 17.6%.
- An estimated 61% of obese young people have at least one additional risk factor for heart disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.
- Children who are obese are at greater risk for bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem.
- Obese young people are more likely than children of normal weight to become overweight or obese adults.
- Healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases.

About St. Joseph Health System

St. Joseph Health System (SJHS) is an integrated healthcare delivery organization that exists to extend the healing ministry of Jesus in the tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. SJHS provides a broad range of medical services within three geographic regions -- Northern California, Southern California and West Texas/Eastern New Mexico. With total revenues of \$3.9 billion, the system family is enriched by the services of more than 24,000 employees and includes 14 hospitals and three home health agencies, as well as hospice care, outpatient services, skilled nursing facilities and physician organizations. In 2008, SJHS provided more than \$267 million in community benefit and care for the poor services.

About American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and its member pediatricians dedicate their efforts and resources to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. The AAP has approximately 60,000 members in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and many other countries. Members include pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists. More than 34,000 members are board-certified and called Fellows of the American Academy of Pediatrics (FAAP).

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