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**July 19, 2004**

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## **MILLIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AT INCREASED RISK FOR TYPE 2 DIABETES**

### ***New Awareness Campaign Uses Humor to Help Reverse Diabetes Risk for African Americans***

(Philadelphia—July 19) About 40 percent of adults ages 40 to 74 – or 41 million people -- have pre-diabetes, a condition that raises a person’s risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. African Americans are twice as likely as whites of similar age to develop diabetes. To help reduce this potential epidemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) launched a public awareness campaign today called “More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes” with Philadelphia’s *Fun, Fit & Free!* healthy lifestyle program. The campaign delivers the message that African Americans can prevent type 2 diabetes. The event took place at the North Philadelphia Seventh-Day Adventist Church, where the city’s model healthy lifestyle program is based.

“More than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes” is part of NDEP’s *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent type 2 Diabetes* campaign, which targets groups at high risk for diabetes. The “More than 50 Ways” campaign uses humorous rhymes to encourage lifestyle change, such as “Less on your plate, Nate” and “Dance it away, Faye.” These messages are offered on motivational tip sheets, radio and print public service advertisements, and posters. More than 200 public and private partners will help to distribute the materials throughout the country.

“We are asking African Americans to find out if they are at risk for type 2 diabetes, and we’re showing them how to take action to prevent it,” said HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson. “The key is regular physical activity and modest weight loss—as little as 5 to 7 percent of your body weight. I want to encourage people to take this message of good health to their families and their communities, so we can put an end to the diabetes epidemic.”

Philadelphia native Frenchy Risco is a member of NDEP’s “Small Steps. Big Rewards. Team to Prevent type 2 Diabetes.” This team was assembled by NDEP to put a human face on the populations that are at high risk for the disease. Each member is actively working in his or her community to prevent diabetes. Mr. Risco recently graduated from the *Fun, Fit & Free!* cooking class and is one of the city’s lay healthy cooking chefs.

Risco’s healthy life choices came as a result of taking a six-week course offered by the *Fun, Fit & Free!* program. Created by the City of Philadelphia as a public-private partnership, the program helps city residents lose weight through free cooking classes, walking tours, and healthy food menus. The program has been lauded by Secretary Thompson as a “fun and challenging” way for city residents to learn to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines and to make wise food choices.

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“Diabetes is ravaging our community. We must spread the word about the many ways we can beat this devastating disease,” said Risco. “I adopted my healthy lifestyle and committed myself to informing my brothers and sisters about the rewards it brings—freedom from blindness, from amputation, from daily injections of insulin. My best friend had his leg amputated as a result of diabetes. I can’t give him a new leg, but I can help inform others about taking small steps now to avoid that fate in the future.”

Dr. James R. Gavin, III, Chair of NDEP and President of Morehouse School of Medicine, says the partnership of community-based healthy living programs and a national public awareness campaign is a prescription for making real inroads to stem the diabetes epidemic in the African American community.

“Every minute of every day, another American develops type 2 diabetes,” said Dr. Gavin at the news conference announcing the outreach effort. “Nearly three million African Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes and millions more are likely to develop the disease in the coming years, unless we get serious about prevention today.”

“This is a job all of us must take part in. African Americans do not have to suffer from diabetes and its complications. Knowing how to eat healthy and increasing their physical activity are keys to longer, healthier lives. We must get the word out that type 2 diabetes prevention is proven, possible, and powerful.”

HHS’ NDEP is a federally funded program, co-sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is a leading source for information about diabetes care and prevention. NDEP has more than 200 partner organizations that form a network to reach the health care community and those affected by diabetes at the federal, state, and local levels.

For more information about the campaign and free materials, including tip sheets and the *GAMEPLAN for Preventing type 2 Diabetes* – tools to help people lose weight, get active, and track their progress – visit the NDEP website at [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov) or call 1-800-438-5383.

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