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NEWS RELEASE

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Multnomah County Awarded \$7.5 million as Part of Recovery Act Prevention and Wellness Initiative, Communities Putting Prevention to Work

Today, Multnomah County was awarded a grant of \$7.5 million for community prevention programs. This grant award is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* initiative to support public health efforts to reduce obesity, increase physical activity, improve nutrition, and decrease smoking—four critical actions for combating chronic diseases and promoting health.

A total of \$372.8 million, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, was awarded to 44 communities, including cities, towns, and tribes. These communities are receiving awards to implement policy and systems and environmental change strategies over the next two years as one of several initiatives of HHS *Communities Putting Prevention to Work*.

According to Multnomah County Health Department Director Lillian Shirley, "This will be a dynamic project based on successful programs we've developed to promote healthy food choices and active living. A defining feature of this effort is our proposal to engage and fully involve community partners. Ultimately, we want the healthier choice to become an easier choice to make."

The competitive funding awards will allow communities to support healthy choices among their residents through a variety of methods including increasing the availability of healthy foods and beverages, and improving access to safe places for physical activity.

Multnomah County Commissioner Jeff Cogen will support the work as a member of the grant project leadership team. "Over half of adults living in Multnomah County are overweight or obese. Not only is this expensive, but many people's lives are at risk. Proper nutrition and physical activity are critical factors in determining the health of our community. I am proud to be a part of this movement which will provide better choices for more people."

The Health Department envisions outcomes of increased levels of physical activity, improved nutrition, and decreased overweight/obesity rates. The core concepts for the project are:

- **Healthy Active Schools:** promotion of physical activity and nutrition in school environments. The grant will fund the hiring of School Wellness Policy Coordinators in seven school districts to develop after-school programs, efforts to encourage safe walking and biking to school, and policies that limit marketing of unhealthy products to children.
- **Healthy Communities by Design:** equitable access to healthy, affordable food and opportunities to be physically active. The cities of Gresham and Portland, as well as

community-based organizations, will receive funding for planning efforts in land use, transportation, parks and recreation, and food policy.

- **Setting-specific Initiatives:** promotion of healthy eating and active living in a variety of settings, including work sites, retailers, neighborhoods, senior centers, faith-based and health care settings

“Treating chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease is the biggest driver of health care costs for Oregon businesses and families,” said U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley. “This funding will help Multnomah County invest in prevention so that we can keep people healthy instead of facing the spiraling costs of treating them once they’re sick.”

Susan Johnson, Regional Director of the Department of Human Services, lends her support as well. “Congratulations to Multnomah County for receiving one of the *Community Putting Prevention to Work* grants. Obesity-related conditions threaten the nation’s health, and the treatment of obesity-related illness costs the United States more than \$147 billion each year. Multnomah County’s strategic focus on health equity, policy approaches, and community partnerships will go a long way in creating lasting, sustainable change.”

To learn more about Multnomah County chronic disease prevention and wellness projects, visit <http://mchealth.org/chronic>.

To learn more about Communities Putting Prevention to Work, visit www.hhs.gov/recovery and www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery.

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