

August 26, 2007
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:
Debra Pate, Communications Specialist
Arkansas Center for Health Improvement
(501) 526-2249, dapate@uams.edu

FIRST REGIONAL SUMMIT EXAMINES PROMISING OBESITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN THE SOUTH

More than an urgent reality in the south, obesity is at crisis proportions, bringing health practitioners, individuals, employers, and community and government leaders together to forge solutions.

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas hosted the nation's first organized regional response to the obesity epidemic that plagues our country, especially the southern states. The Southern Obesity Summit was held in Little Rock, August 26 – 28, 2007.

Attended by more than 200 representatives from 14 southern and surrounding states, the summit was designed to provide a place for exchanging ideas, lessons learned and inspirations. Stakeholders from each of the 14 participating states were invited to attend the summit, encouraged to meet in advance as a team, and then to participate as a team to develop a state obesity action plan.

States asked to participate in the invitation-only conference were: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Several national organizations whose work includes obesity prevention set the stage by providing highlights of private and public sector programs with examples from the south. Speakers included representatives from: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, who recently pledged \$500 million to help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic; The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, led by former President, Bill Clinton; Trust for America's Health, author of the fourth annual "F is for Fat" state overview report released during the summit; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overall, the conference examined existing evidence and identified what stimulates and sustains innovation. The final day of the conference utilized Open Space Technology to elevate regional energy and commitment to addressing obesity.

The Southern Obesity Summit was co-hosted by the Texas Health Institute in collaboration with the Southern Regional Health Consortium, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, the Directors of Health Promotion and Education, the National Society of Physical Activity Practitioners in Public Health, and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.

###

ACHI is a nonpartisan, independent, health policy center that serves as a catalyst to improve the health of Arkansans.



1401 West Capitol Avenue
Suite 300, Victory Building
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
www.achi.net