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JUNIOR LEAGUE LAUNCHES FOURTH ANNUAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND NUTRITION INITIATIVE

Leagues in Four Countries Continue Award-Winning Grassroots Education Initiative to Curb Childhood Obesity

NEW YORK, February 18, 2008—The Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. (AJLI) will launch its fourth annual Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen* education initiative on childhood obesity and nutrition this March, in conjunction with National Nutrition Month in the United States and Canada. The well-established initiative helps communities across four countries address the consequences of childhood obesity and poor nutrition. This year it will continue to teach youngsters about healthy eating by involving them in the preparation of their own meals and by equipping them with the knowledge they need to make healthy choices.

More than 200 Junior Leagues are participating in the grassroots initiative to empower children to adopt healthy lifestyles. Organized in 2006, *Kids in the Kitchen* responds to the staggering statistic that nearly one-third of children and adolescents in North and South America will be overweight by 2010, a condition that puts them at increased risk of contracting Type II diabetes, high blood pressure and numerous other ailments related to obesity including self-esteem issues. Also, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), this will be the first generation of children to not outlive their parents.

"In Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States, Junior Leagues are determined to remain at the forefront of the struggle to enable children to take control of their health," said Debbie Brown Robinson, President of AJLI. "This year, the Junior Leagues will continue their grassroots *Kids in the Kitchen* campaign to provide children with hands-on education activities related to nutrition and healthy meal preparation. We believe that education and hands-on involvement are the first steps toward addressing the urgent issues surrounding childhood obesity."

Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen* is an ideal example of an effective program that works to combat childhood obesity on the local level, as well as the national and international stages. The program, now in its fourth year, was recognized by the American Society of Association Executives in late 2008 with their highest honor, the Summit Award. The numerous community programs rolling out in 2009 take a grassroots approach to health education that aims to alter the behaviors of young people and enable

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them to adopt healthy lifestyles that will stay with them throughout their lives and into adulthood. This year, the program's educational partners include several organizations who share the same passion for combating childhood obesity including: Cartoon Network; *EatingWell* Magazine; National Heart, Lung and Blood Institutes' We Can! Program; U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC); and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Kids in the Kitchen also provides information and educational tools through kidsinthekitchen.org, a robust resource for parents and children. The Junior Leagues' comprehensive website has undergone recent enhancements and now includes even more content focused on childhood health. On the website parents can find healthy recipes from chefs and celebrities that will be fun for youngsters to make while learning about healthy food preparation and opening their diets to new healthy foods. New features also include *Kids in the Kitchen* TV, where parents and children can view healthy cooking demonstrations provided by *EatingWell* Magazine. Additional resources include nutrition and exercise tips, quizzes, an educational game provided by Cartoon Network featuring characters from the hit series *Camp Lazlo*, and the USDA's MyPyramid Blast-Off game, a fun way for youngsters to learn the most current guidelines for daily food consumption and exercise.

During National Nutrition Month in March, and throughout the year, thousands of kids will share in the fun of learning to prepare nutritious foods that enhance their own lives and help their families stay healthy, too. As the epidemic of childhood obesity worsens, the *Kids in the Kitchen* initiative will continue to spread the knowledge and tools necessary to help put an end to this urgent health problem.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1901 by New Yorker, Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are charitable nonprofit organizations of women committed to voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Association of Junior Leagues International Inc. is made up of 292 Junior Leagues in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States. Together, they are one of the largest international volunteer organizations for women interested in making a positive impact in their communities. For more information, visit the website www.ajli.org.

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