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Healthy Portsmouth Launches City-wide Health & Wellness Initiative

Portsmouth, VA – (October 25, 2010) **Healthy Portsmouth** will announce its plan for improving the health of citizens on Tuesday, October 26th, at 10:00 a.m. at the Churchland Branch of the Portsmouth Public Library, 4934 High Street West.

Portsmouth was selected to become a national Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and EnVironmental Change (ACHIEVE) site in February. Following the development of a highly placed leadership team and comprehensive community assessment, Healthy Portsmouth will launch a City-wide health and wellness initiative, the first such initiative in Hampton Roads.

The Healthy Portsmouth Community Action Plan will focus on increasing walkability through improving pedestrian safety and developing destination oriented routes; enhancing school health and wellness through the school systems' wellness plan and associated activities; decreasing tobacco smoke exposure in housing and public venues; promoting breastfeeding in workplaces and public venues; and, increasing health messages through a comprehensive community-wide media campaign over the next year. The group has already leveraged resources into the community to launch aspects of the plan while other actions will be fueled by community activism and incorporating changes into plans already underway in the City, such as the implementation of the Master Transportation Plan.

Healthy Portsmouth's vision is to make Portsmouth the healthiest place to live, learn, play, work and worship. "Portsmouth has its share of health challenges. Healthy Portsmouth will support the City in making policy, systems and environmental changes that will make the healthy choice the easy choice," says Brannon Godfrey, Portsmouth Deputy City Manager and Healthy Portsmouth Leader. "Not only will this initiative make Portsmouth a healthier City, it also puts us in a position of providing leadership to improve health across the entire Hampton Roads region"

Portsmouth is one of 10 U.S. communities in nine states and one territory that selected this year by the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors to advance community leadership in the nation's efforts to prevent chronic diseases and related risk-factors through a local collaborative approach. ACHIEVE is an innovative approach that brings together local leaders and stakeholders in all sectors of a community to build healthier communities by promoting policy, systems, and environmental change strategies that focus on physical activity, nutrition, tobacco cessation, obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. ACHIEVE is supported by the Healthy Communities Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is the catalyst for the new Healthy Portsmouth Movement.

The Consortium for Infant and Child Health at Eastern Virginia Medical School (CINCH), a community child health coalition, was awarded the funding for this initiative and will manage the grant on behalf of the City and ACHIEVE partners. CINCH, Portsmouth Health Department, Portsmouth YMCA, and the Office of the Portsmouth City Manager, Department of Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services, Portsmouth Public Schools, the Portsmouth General Hospital Foundation, Portsmouth Redevelopment & Housing Authority, and WHRO Center for Regional Citizenship comprise the core planning team that will oversee the implementation of positive change for a healthier City during the three-year program.

"CINCH continues to be energized by the enthusiasm of the community in coming forward to identify the areas that we needed to work on first", said Amy Paulson, CINCH Director. "Healthy Portsmouth and ACHIEVE focus on setting the right stage for healthy behaviors like avoiding tobacco exposure and increasing healthy eating and physical activity. Everyone in Portsmouth will benefit from ACHIEVE even though we

expect that some changes will be challenging. This is a fantastic opportunity to create a healthier community.”

To date, the NACDD, the National County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and the YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) have partnered to fund 40 communities to become part of ACHIEVE, a leadership empowerment model that is mobilizing communities to respond to the public health challenge of obesity, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition. For a complete listing of all funded communities, please visit the ACHIEVE Web site at

www.achievecommunities.org or CDC’s Healthy Communities Program’s Web site at: www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/

CINCH is a nationally recognized child health coalition whose mission is to engage the community to improve children’s health. CINCH was established in 1993 as a demonstration project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Together with over 200 community partners and its lead agency Eastern Virginia Medical School, CINCH made significant progress in improving the health of children in Virginia. In Hampton Roads, CINCH has improved immunization rates, asthma management, perinatal health; enrolled thousands of children in health insurance programs; promoted implementation of community obesity prevention policies; trained thousands of local health and service providers on children’s health issues; advocated for a multitude of child health issues; and brought significant resources into the region to improve children’s health.

The City of Portsmouth is dedicated to improving health and collaborating through the ACHIEVE and resulting Healthy Portsmouth Initiative. The City will continue to provide leadership for the initiative and engage the public in promoting healthy policies, places and people.

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