

ADA Supports First Lady's Childhood Obesity Initiative

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Statement from American Dietetic Association President

Media contacts: Jennifer Starkey, Ryan O'Malley
800/877-1600, ext. 4802, 4769
media@eatright.org

CHICAGO – The following is a statement from registered dietitian and American Dietetic Association President Jessie M. Pavlinac in support of the new White House initiative on childhood obesity to be led by First Lady Michelle Obama:

With all American Dietetic Association members, I was gratified to hear President Obama speak during his January 27 State of the Union Address on efforts Mrs. Obama will lead to address childhood obesity in our country. Mrs. Obama announced the initiative at a recent meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. As the President said: "I want to acknowledge our First Lady, Michelle Obama, who this year is creating a national movement to tackle the epidemic of childhood obesity and make our kids healthier."

Few if any issues matter more than the health of our nation's children. Recently I wrote to Mrs. Obama on behalf of the more than 70,000 ADA members, the majority of whom are registered dietitians, thanking and congratulating her for putting good nutrition and healthful eating front and center in her priorities as First Lady. I will continue to keep her informed of the important work of ADA and our members.

As a registered dietitian, it has been inspiring to see Mrs. Obama's dedication – as both First Lady and as a mother – to stressing the importance of consuming fruits and vegetables; to the nutrition and societal rewards of, when possible, planting and growing some of one's own food; and to her overall focus on healthful eating and a healthy lifestyle. ADA shares the Obama Administration's concerns about the numbers of children who are overweight or obese, and who are at increased risk for chronic illnesses like diabetes, and we are working to reverse current trends and to help parents, schools and communities to raise healthy, well-nourished children.

To name only one example among many, the American Dietetic Association Foundation's [Healthy Schools Partnership](#) is a program designed to develop long-term solutions to the youth obesity epidemic. The Healthy Schools Partnership program was funded by the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition Foundation as part of the [Healthy Weight Commitment](#) campaign. The program places registered dietitians in schools as "RD Nutrition Coaches," working with physical education coaches to help children change eating behaviors with short, one-on-one coaching sessions while being physically active.

Our country's registered dietitians specialize in offering guidance that is personalized, doable, practical and affordable. RDs know what does and doesn't work. We can cut through the clutter of information that is often overwhelming, scattered and inaccurate, and serve as a person's lifeline to eating right.

Our nation has paid a high price for overlooking or ignoring the important role of food and nutrition in improving people's health – a price paid in lives and dollars alike. Right now, as health reform makes its way through Congress and toward President Obama's desk, we have the opportunity to reverse trends, lower costs and help people get and stay healthy.

As the leading experts in food and nutrition, ADA members look forward to working with Mrs. Obama and the White House on this important fight for our children's health and future, and with Congress on legislation that creates policies that support food, nutrition and health of all Americans.