

LET'S GO! AWARDS MINI-GRANT TO THREE NONPROFIT AGENCIES

Agencies collaborate to promote healthy eating and physical activity, preventing childhood obesity

(Portland, Maine – June 22, 2010) Let's Go! – the community-based program that promotes healthy lifestyle choices for children, youth and families in Greater Portland – has issued a mini-grant of close to \$10,000 to a consortium of Portland childcare providers. The funds will be used by Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, Youth and Family Outreach and St. Elizabeth's Child Development Center. These agencies will collaborate and share grant funds to ensure that all three environments are equipped with similar materials to promote healthy eating and physical activity. These are the important environmental changes that support childhood obesity prevention work that is already occurring in the facilities.

The grant funds will provide new kitchen equipment, including a commercial food processor and a range hood, as well new surfacing for a toddler playground. Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, for example, prepares lunch and snacks for 70-75 children per day and the commercial grade food processor will help the kitchen staff prepare healthier foods more efficiently and also hold up to wear and tear better than one intended for household use. Other kitchen equipment will include special serving spoons specifically designed to measure appropriate portion sizes allowing teachers to help children gain better understanding of portion size; and color-coded cutting boards and knives to slice fresh fruits and vegetables for the children, with the aim being to stimulate conversations about such foods.

In Maine, over 30 percent of middle school children (ages 9-12); 27 percent of high school children (ages 13-18); and 36 percent of kindergarten students are overweight or at-risk of being overweight. In Greater Portland, one out of every three children ages 3 to 18 is overweight or obese.

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Let's Go! works with thousands of people every day, including 22,000 students in 54 schools; 700 children in 10 childcare sites; more than 2,500 youth in eight after-school recreation centers; hundreds of childcare providers through statewide training and outreach; 20 healthcare practices in the Greater Portland region; and almost 10,000 employees at five of Portland's largest employers.

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About Let's Go!

Let's Go! is a program of United Way of Greater Portland, implemented in partnership with The Kids CO-OP at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center. Let's Go! is supported by its seven Founding Partners, a unique combination of Maine's leading health, business and community-based organizations: Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation, Hannaford Bros. Co., MaineHealth, Maine Medical Center, TD Charitable Foundation, Unum and United Way of Greater Portland. These funders were later joined by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, a Platinum Supporter. The Let's Go 5-2-1-0 Goes To School Program is also funded in part by The Mattina R. Proctor Foundation.