



## MEDIA ALERT

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF PASCO AND HERNANDO COUNTIES, INC. HOSTS FREE “EAT SMART FOR A HEALTHY START!” BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT

*The Coalition will partner with local business and child care providers to celebrate health and education by providing free lunchboxes, eye exams and more for children at three events in Pasco and Hernando Counties.*

The **Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.** is hosting its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual “**Eat Smart for a Healthy Start!**” back-to-school event on **August 7, 8 and 9, 2012** in three locations throughout Pasco and Hernando counties from **4:00 PM to 7:00 PM**.

The first 100 children (aged birth to 8 years old) at each event will take home a free lunchbox filled with healthy snacks and back to school items, including a First Aid Kit from event sponsor, Walgreens.

Local vendors at each event include:

- **All Pediatrics** of Spring Hill, offering free eye exams for children at the New Port Richey and Brooksville locations
- **Florida KidCare**, health insurance for children birth through age 18 ([www.FloridaKidCare.com](http://www.FloridaKidCare.com))
- **Foundation for Early Learning in Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.** ([www.phelc.org/foundation](http://www.phelc.org/foundation))
- **WellCare**, source of Medicare and Medicaid plans ([www.wellcare.com](http://www.wellcare.com))
- **Wholota Wellness**, lifestyle improvement, stress management and personal health improvement ([www.wholotawellness.com](http://www.wholotawellness.com))

Participating local child care providers will teach children about healthy eating and educate parents about their child care services:

- **Just Kidz Preschool**, Brooksville
- **A Brighter Future**, Brooksville
- **Lil' Campers Academy**, Dade City
- **Sea of Learning**, New Port Richey

- **Little Sunshine Preschool and Learning Center**, New Port Richey

Join the Coalition and its partners to celebrate the new school year at the following locations:

**BROOKSVILLE**

**Date:** Tuesday, August 7, 2012

**Time:** 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

**Location:** Brooksville Library, 238 Howell Avenue, Brooksville, FL 34601

**DADE CITY**

**Date:** Wednesday, August 8, 2012

**Time:** 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

**Location:** CDC Across from RCMA Childcare, 15029 14<sup>th</sup> St., Dade City, FL 33523

**NEW PORT RICHEY**

**Date:** Thursday, August 9, 2012

**Time:** 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

**Location:** Rasmussen College, 8661 Citizens Drive, New Port Richey, FL 34654

The Coalition, with local child care providers and business partners, aims to support healthy eating, providing families with tools to make healthy, nutritional choices in a fun, child-friendly way.

This event would not be possible without our local sponsors, including:

- **Walgreens**
- **Kohls**
- **All Pediatrics**
- **United Parcel Service (UPS)**
- **Paul & Jerry's Storage**

For more information about this event, contact Bev Doucet at (727) 233-8291 or [b.doucet@phelc.org](mailto:b.doucet@phelc.org).

For nutrition facts about adolescent and school health, please see pages 3-5 below.

For more information about the ELC and its services, visit [www.phelc.org](http://www.phelc.org).

*The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. is one of 31 Early Learning Coalitions in Florida. It works to ensure that programs and services are available to assist families with young children during their formative years. Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is for all children who are four-years old on or before September 1st. School Readiness provides assistance for low-to-moderate income working families by paying a portion of the childcare costs on a sliding fee schedule. Starting as separate organizations in 2000, Pasco and Hernando counties joined forces to form the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties in 2005. The non-profit serves over nine thousand children between infancy and eight years old, working with over 300 providers in the counties.*

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# CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/nutrition/facts.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/nutrition/facts.html)

(Information current as of July 5, 2012)

## Nutrition Facts

- Healthy eating is associated with reduced risk for many diseases, including several of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.<sup>1</sup>
  - Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development and can prevent health problems such as obesity, dental caries, iron deficiency, and osteoporosis.<sup>1,2</sup>
  - The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat dairy products for persons aged 2 years and older. The guidelines also recommend that children, adolescents, and adults limit intake of solid fats (major sources of saturated and trans fatty acids), cholesterol, sodium, added sugars, and refined grains.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, most young people are not following the recommendations set forth in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.<sup>3-7</sup>
  - Schools are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and help ensure appropriate food and nutrient intake among students. Schools provide students with opportunities to consume an array of foods and beverages throughout the school day and enable students to learn about and practice healthy eating behaviors.
  - Schools should ensure that only nutritious and appealing foods and beverages are provided in school cafeterias, vending machines, snack bars, school stores, and other venues that offer food and beverages to students. In addition, nutrition education should be part of a comprehensive school health education curriculum.
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## Nutrition and the Health of Young People

### Benefits of Healthy Eating

- Proper nutrition promotes the optimal growth and development of children.<sup>1</sup>
- Healthy eating helps prevent high cholesterol and high blood pressure and helps reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes.<sup>1</sup>
- Healthy eating helps reduce one's risk for developing obesity, osteoporosis, iron deficiency, and dental caries (cavities).<sup>1,2</sup>

### Consequences of a Poor Diet

- A poor diet can lead to energy imbalance (e.g., eating more calories than one expends through physical activity) and can increase one's risk for overweight and obesity.<sup>1,8</sup>
- A poor diet can increase the risk for lung, esophageal, stomach, colorectal, and prostate cancers.<sup>9</sup>
- Individuals who eat fast food one or more times per week are at increased risk for weight gain, overweight, and obesity.<sup>1</sup>
- Drinking sugar-sweetened beverages can result in weight gain, overweight, and obesity.<sup>1</sup>

- Providing [access to drinking water](#) gives students a healthy alternative to sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Hunger and *food insecurity* (i.e., reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns because a household lacks money and other resources for food) might increase the risk for lower dietary quality and undernutrition. In turn, undernutrition can negatively affect overall health, cognitive development, and school performance.<sup>10-12</sup>

## Eating Behaviors of Young People

- Most U.S. youth
  - Do not meet the recommendations for eating 2½ cups to 6½ cups\* of fruits and vegetables each day
  - Do not eat the minimum recommended amounts of whole grains (2–3 ounces\* each day)
  - Eat more than the recommended maximum daily intake of sodium (1,500–2,300 mg\* each day)<sup>1,3,7</sup>
- Empty calories from added sugars and solid fats contribute to 40% of daily calories for children and adolescents aged 2–18 years, affecting the overall quality of their diets. Approximately half of these empty calories come from six sources: soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, grain desserts, pizza, and whole milk.<sup>5</sup>
- Adolescents drink more full-calorie soda per day than milk. Males aged 12–19 years drink an average of 22 ounces of full-calorie soda per day, more than twice their intake of fluid milk (10 ounces), and females drink an average of 14 ounces of full-calorie soda and only 6 ounces of fluid milk.<sup>6</sup>

## Diet and Academic Performance

- Eating a healthy breakfast is associated with improved cognitive function (especially memory), reduced absenteeism, and improved mood.<sup>13-15</sup>

### Key Resources [School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity](#)

- [Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth](#)
- [Implementing Strong Nutrition Standards for Schools: Financial Implications](#)  [pdf 1.9M]
- [Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories](#)
- [National Cancer Institute's Risk Factor Monitoring and Methods: Food Sources](#)  Data on U.S. dietary intake of the top food sources.
- [More Publications & Resources](#)

\*Depending on age and other individual characteristics

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