

# PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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## For Immediate Release

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## **Local agencies awarded obesity prevention grant *Ohio ranks as fifth heaviest state in nation***

Ravenna, Ohio, Nov. 19, 2008 – The Portage County Health Department is one of only 14 Ohio health departments to receive state funds to reduce the risk of obesity in the local population. The Healthy Ohio Obesity Prevention grant was fully funded in the amount of \$85,000 and will support collaborative obesity-fighting efforts of the Portage County Health Department, Robinson Memorial Hospital's Health Education Center, Robinson Health Affiliates, Kent State University, and the Portage County Community Health Center. Overall, Ohio ranks as the fifth heaviest state in the nation.

Poor nutrition and physical inactivity are driving an obesity epidemic that leads to preventable illness such as heart disease and diabetes as well as sky-rocketing health care costs.

Dr. Angela DeJulius, Portage County Health Department Medical Director said, "We want to increase opportunities for more physical activity while improving access to nutritious foods and motivating citizens to lead healthier lives." Programs funded by the grant will promote healthy behaviors through family, school and health care settings.

Obesity-reduction and prevention efforts are especially important because nearly four out of ten Ohio residents are overweight and three out of ten are obese. In Portage County, 40 percent of children are overweight and 22 percent are considered obese. During their youth, overweight children and adolescents are more likely to have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes than children of a healthy weight.

"If a child is obese, it sets him or her up for a lifelong struggle with health problems like heart disease and diabetes," said Suzanne Hughes, MSN, RN, director, RMH Health Education Center. "We have to remember that children are not preparing their own food, so we need to work with families and schools on healthy eating and exercise programs."

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Locally, the grant will provide direct services and resources to Portage County residents, schools and physicians. The grant will also create a county-wide Obesity Prevention Coalition. As part of the coalition:

- RMH will deliver obesity prevention resources to primary care physicians.
- Kent State will expand its nutrition and physical activity group education programs for schools and families.
- The Portage County Health Department will advocate strengthening health-related school policies.
- The partners will expand research that measures the prevalence of overweight and obese in Portage County.

For more information or to participate in the coalition, please contact Jodie Luidhardt MS, RD, LD, of the Kent State Nutrition Outreach Program at 330-672-2063.

### **About the Portage County Health Department**

The mission of the Portage County Combined General Health District is to protect the health, safety and well being of the citizens of the Portage County Combined General Health District, to promote health, to prevent disease, and to assure that all persons are provided a better quality of life and increased longevity. Along with inspecting everything from the county's fanciest restaurant to septic systems, the Health Department also provides a wide range of services and programs designed to keep us well. For more information, please visit <http://www.co.portage.oh.us/healthdepartment.htm>.

### **About Kent State University and the Nutrition Outreach Program**

Kent State University's eight-campus system, one of the largest regional systems in the country, serves both the development of a true living/learning approach at the Kent Campus and the regional needs on seven other campuses throughout Northeast Ohio. The Kent Campus provides the resources and facilities of a large, diverse university. The Nutrition Outreach Program offers its services to all KSU students, KSU employees, and community members of Portage County. The Nutrition Outreach Program provides nutrition education on weight control, cardiovascular conditions, digestive disorders, diabetes, eating disorders, general nutrition, pediatric nutrition, childhood obesity, sports nutrition, vegetarian, food allergies, and food safety. For more information, please visit [www.kent.edu](http://www.kent.edu).

### **About the Portage County Community Health Center**

After years of planning, the Portage County Community Health Center began serving patients on November 3, 2008. The center provides a safety net for people facing financial, social, cultural and language challenges in obtaining care. The center provides medical care, medication access and other services regardless of a patient's ability to pay or insurance status.

To refer a patient, call 330-673-1016. For more information, please visit [www.achrhealth.com](http://www.achrhealth.com).

### **About Robinson Memorial Hospital**

Located in Ravenna, Robinson Memorial Hospital is a 150-staffed-bed progressive hospital serving the residents of Portage County and surrounding communities. The second-largest employer in the county, Robinson Memorial Hospital includes an urgent care facility; surgery center; free-standing, comprehensive imaging facilities and a network of physician practices throughout Portage County. Robinson Memorial Hospital is recognized as one of the best places to work in Northeast Ohio by the Employers Resource Council and has been designated a Magnet hospital by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Magnet recognizes quality patient care and nursing excellence and provides consumers with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of care they can expect to receive. Robinson Memorial Hospital is an affiliate member of Summa Health System. For more information, please visit [www.robinsonmemorial.org](http://www.robinsonmemorial.org).

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