



For Immediate Release

September 24, 2009

Contact:

Pat Kearney

(703) 841-1600

pmk@pmkassociates.com

High Risk Students in School Weight Loss Program Lose While Others Gain

Alexandria, DC, September 24, 2009 -- A landmark study published in *Obesity* shows that, 80% of high-risk adolescents decreased or maintained weight, while almost 65% of the control group gained at one year. At two years, two thirds continued to lose or kept weight off, which was the direct opposite to the two thirds of the control group who gained. The adolescents are part of a school weight loss program, which targets snacking and feeds peanuts as an acceptable healthy alternative. This is the first long-term study to show extended weight loss in a real world setting in minority students. It shows that the pattern of weight gain can be broken.

"We focused heavily on modifying behavior by showing the kids how to swap healthy snacks such as peanuts or peanut butter with fruits or vegetables for less healthy snacks they were carrying in their backpacks," said Dr. Craig Johnston, Instructor at the Behavioral Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, who is overseeing the study conducted at the USDA-ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center in Houston, Texas, which is funded by United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS).

The study is based on data from the "Family Lifestyle and Overweight" (FLOW) Prevention Program, which is successfully entering its sixth year. It is a school-based community program focusing on Mexican-American adolescents, ages 10-15. FLOW takes a positive approach by working with overall lifestyle, nutrition education, behavior modification, and physical activity. Children are more overweight than they ever have been and the epidemic of obesity is continuing to grow out of control, especially in high-risk Mexican Americans. In fact, severe childhood obesity has increased more than 70% over 15 years in this population.

Dr. John Foreyt, Director of the Behavioral Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine and principal investigator of the study said, "Many of the children reported skipping meals, but ate high calorie, low nutrient snacks. Snacking has been the reported cause of increasing calorie intake over the past 30 years so we focused on making this snack healthy."

The unique focus on snacking was a key intervention in this study as it targeted the most vulnerable times of day. Peanuts and peanut butter with fruits and vegetables were well accepted and were swapped out during class every day as a strategy to improve quality of calories, feelings of fullness, and unhealthy eating habits.

Peanuts have been shown in previous studies to help people stay full longer than when eating high carbohydrate snacks. They are high in plant protein, fiber, and heart-healthy fats, which may

contribute to this. Additionally, survey data show that Americans who consume 5 or more servings of peanuts per week are thinner than those who consume them less often.

The FLOW study incorporates practical approaches that are translatable alternatives for prevention and treatment in adolescents and has been extremely successful in a school-based community setting.

The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthful lifestyles. Learn more about peanuts and health at <http://www.peanut-institute.org>

###