



# News Release

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## Iowa Business Council Announces *PE4life* “Adopt-A-School Challenge”

**DES MOINES, IOWA – (October 6, 2009)** Today the Iowa Business Council (IBC) announces its launch of the *PE4life* Adopt-A-School Challenge. *PE4life* is a national non-profit advocacy organization committed to inspiring and promoting healthy lifestyles in all children across the country through regular access to quality physical education programs in schools. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in 2007 by the Center for Disease Control, 28.8% of Iowa students grades 9 through 12 were deemed to be either overweight (15.8%) or obese (13%). The Challenge seeks to develop an enriched culture of active, healthy lifestyles in elementary and secondary school children throughout Iowa.

“Research shows that creating healthy habits in children at an early age leads to making healthier dietary and fitness choices for themselves as adults,” said Mel Haught, President and CEO of Pella Corporation and current Chair of the Iowa Business Council. “More immediately, healthy and active school children also perform better academically and have fewer behavioral issues. The objective of the *PE4life* Adopt-A-School Challenge is to help Iowa become the healthiest state in the country, and one way of doing so is to directly address the epidemic of overweight and obese children.”

Earlier this week, the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Food Marketing Institute, both of which represent leading U.S. manufacturers, retailers, and wholesalers in the food and beverage industry, jointly announced that their Healthy Weight Commitment initiative is launching the Healthy Schools Partnership (HSP). Using a three-year pilot format, the HSP will introduce and sustain a curriculum for children ages 6-11 that combines physical education and nutrition education within four schools in each of three communities: Washington, D.C., Kansas City, and Des Moines. The HSP will also support a tribal community in Iowa and a school in Chicago. Hy-Vee’s Registered Dietitians will be working with the HSP Partners to provide nutrition education to the students in Iowa. The Healthy Schools Partnership consists of the expertise of the American Dietetic Association Foundation, the American Council on Fitness and Nutrition, and *PE4life*.

The Iowa Business Council will use its *PE4life* Adopt-A-School Challenge to scale-up the Healthy Weight Commitment’s HSP model, expanding its impact beyond Des Moines and making Iowa the first state in the nation to offer *PE4life* statewide. IBC is encouraging its member companies and institutions to collaborate with local school districts to develop *PE4life* programs in their own communities. The goal is to leverage resources so that *PE4life* programs are initiated in 50 Iowa elementary or secondary schools over a five-year timeframe. Total cost

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for technology installation, training, and professional development is estimated at \$2.475 million. The Wellmark Foundation, Hy-Vee, and Iowa Health System have already committed a total of \$1.5 million to the effort, and are urging other businesses and institutions around the state to get involved. The Business Council itself will offer limited funding support for initial program implementation needs such as software, data collection, and research costs.

“*PE4life* combines today’s best practices in physical education to inspire and educate all students about the vital importance of lifetime physical activity and fitness,” said John Forsyth, Chairman & CEO of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. “The program incorporates cardiovascular fitness, muscular and strength endurance, team building, and adventure education within a curriculum created for all children – not just those who are athletically inclined. It also utilizes technology and individualized assessments, and encourages involvement of local health, medical, and business communities. IBC supports initiatives that develop healthy, active, productive school children. It’s these children who we hope will eventually grow to become healthy, active, productive adults.”

Up to 34% of U.S. children and teenagers today are considered overweight or obese, the prevalence of which varies by ethnic group. Though not all obese children become obese adults, obesity tends to increase with age among both males and females, and there is a greater likelihood that early childhood obesity will persist throughout a person’s lifetime. Numerous physical risks and psychological problems exist for obese children, including pediatric hypertension, Type II diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, stress on weight-bearing joints, lower self-esteem, and negative relationships with peers. Unless the situation changes in dramatic fashion very soon, today’s children will be the first generation in memory to have a shorter life span than their parents.

“Evidence exists that children learn better and achieve best when they are physically fit,” said *PE4life* President & CEO Anne Flannery. “Cardiovascular exercise literally builds new brain cells. Exercise has also been shown to improve attention span and focus, lower anxiety and depression levels, and result in fewer discipline incidents – all factors that impact learning. After students exercise they are less impulsive, their motivation to learn is increased, and they have less desire to get out of their chairs and move around. A more fit and smarter student population is what the Healthy Weight Commitment and the Business Council seek. This is why they are both committing resources in Iowa to implement aggressive initiatives focused on better nutrition and physical education for kids.”

“*PE4life* is dedicated to significant expansion in Iowa,” said Ric Jurgens, Chairman, CEO, & President of Hy-Vee. He is also current Chair of the Food Marketing Institute, Vice Chair of the Healthy Weight Commitment, and a member of the Iowa Business Council. “The Adopt-A-School Challenge offers an exciting opportunity for unique partnerships between local schools and businesses aimed at improving the health and academic achievement of our most vital resource, the next generation of Iowa youth.”

For more information on the *PE4life* Adopt-A-School Challenge, please visit the Iowa Business Council Web site at [www.iowabusinesscouncil.org](http://www.iowabusinesscouncil.org), or contact its office in Des Moines by phoning 515.246.1700.

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The **Iowa Business Council** (IBC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, self-funded organization whose 24 members are the top executives of 20 of the largest businesses in the state, the three Regent university presidents, and Iowa's largest banking association. Founded in 1985, the Council's purpose is to focus the personal commitment of its members in active leadership roles on major initiatives that offer opportunity to enhance Iowa's economic vitality and improve the lives of Iowans. Council members identify major economic issues, evaluate options, and assist in implementing solutions through collaborative public/private partnerships. **Collectively**, IBC companies and institutions employ more than 210,000 Iowans and, in just the last 10 years, have invested over \$15 billion worth of capital in the state. **Annually**, the Business Council represents more than \$300 million in financial contributions and volunteer hours given to numerous charitable causes around Iowa. Council member companies and institutions are leaders in technology innovation with over \$3.0 billion in spending and procured grants for research and development. For more information, please visit the IBC Web site at [www.iowabusinesscouncil.org](http://www.iowabusinesscouncil.org).

**About PE4life®:**

*PE4life* is a national non-profit organization dedicated to *develop a country of active and healthy children and youth by increasing access to quality physical education solutions by engaging them in a fun and interactive way*. Headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, *PE4life* is strong in advocacy with a step-by-step integration program in place. *PE4life* is based upon the approach that physical education should:

- Be directed to all students, not just the athletically inclined
- Offer a variety of fitness, sport, leisure, and adventure activities
- Provide a safe and encouraging learning environment
- Utilize individual assessments
- Incorporate current technology
- Extend beyond the walls of the gymnasium
- Ideally, be offered to every child every day

*PE4life* impacts 2 million children annually, throughout the United States and across the world. To learn more about *PE4life*, visit [www.pe4life.org](http://www.pe4life.org).

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