



Contact: Jessica Badger, 202-690-6343  
Brian Wesolowski, 202-414-0779

## **HHS HONORS WELLNESS INCORPORATED FOR ITS DELTA H.O.P.E. TRI-STATE PROGRAM**

Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt announced today that Wellness Incorporated of Duluth, Georgia is one of ten nationwide winners of the Third Annual Innovation in Prevention Awards for its role in the Delta H.O.P.E. Tri-State Initiative that aims to improve children's health through classroom based intervention in the Delta Regions of Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas. Secretary Leavitt will present the awards on October 24<sup>th</sup> at a luncheon in Washington, DC.

The award was created as part of President Bush's *HealthierUS* initiative and HHS's continuing focus on preventing chronic disease and improving Americans' lives. The awards highlight businesses and organizations that are leading efforts to promote healthier lifestyles in seven different areas. Wellness Incorporated was honored in the Schools K-12 category.

"Wellness Incorporated addresses the importance of educating our youth about nutrition and physical fitness," Secretary Leavitt said. "The Delta H.O.P.E. Tri-State Initiative is an example of how schools can incorporate important curriculum to teach the importance of healthy habits in a creative way."

The Delta H.O.P.E. Tri-State Initiative is a partnership of Wellness Incorporated, The Mississippi Alliance for Self-Sufficiency and the ILSI Center for Health Promotion, in collaboration with cooperative extension agents and elementary schools in the Delta Region. The Initiative presents The OrganWise Guys characters, developed by Wellness Incorporated, to elementary school children. The OrganWise Guys help teach young children physiology and lifelong healthy behaviors through read along books, games, dolls and informational videos. The Initiative also encourages the integration of short bouts of physical activity with academic lessons. In May 2005, Delta H.O.P.E. was recognized by the Cooper Institute as one of the programs with the greatest potential to reduce child obesity.

"The private/public partnership model is the cornerstone of this project's success," says Dr. Michelle Lombardo, President of Wellness Inc. "This model effectively utilizes the strength of each partner, creating a successful, duplicatable program that addresses the health issues facing our children today."

-more-

Funding for the Initiative is provided to the Mississippi Food Network by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. During the 2003-2004, nearly 4,000 students from the Delta region benefited from the program. At least 50% of the students achieved full mastery of objectives on nutrition, physical activity and general health and safety by the end of the program.

###

---

Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>. To request an interview or additional information, contact Jessica Badger at 202-690-6343, [Jessica.Badger@hhs.gov](mailto:Jessica.Badger@hhs.gov) or Brian Wesolowski at 202-414-0779, [brian@susandavis.com](mailto:brian@susandavis.com).

