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HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg Join Children's Museum of Manhattan and Louisiana Children's Museum to Announce Program to Combat Early Childhood Obesity

National and Local Agencies Join Forces to Launch Programs in High-Need Communities in New York and New Orleans

New Orleans, LA October 23, 2009 – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today joined the Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) in New York City in announcing the Museum's new program to combat early childhood obesity in high-need communities. CMOM's program brings together national and local agencies to address a critical gap in national obesity-prevention efforts by testing a health education model for families with young children.

CMOM was recently awarded a National Leadership grant of \$838,000 from the *Institute of Museum and Library Services* (IMLS) to implement the program which adapts the National Institute of Health's (NIH), part of the US Department of Health and Human Services, ***We Can!***[™] **Energize our Families: Parent's Program.** **CMOM's adaptation of the *We Can!* parent program will be piloted and evaluated with families of children ages 2-5 years at East Side House Settlement in the South Bronx, and then in New Orleans in partnership with the Louisiana Children's Museum.** CMOM will also reinforce ***We Can!*** messages through a new exhibit and public programs at the Museum. Seed funds to develop this initiative were generously provided by a \$250,000 grant from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund and ongoing program support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

"Helping our children live healthier lifestyles is a top priority for this administration," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. "Partnerships like this one are a great example of the kinds of creative efforts we need in order to reach at-risk children and their families with the information and resources that can help them live longer, healthier, more productive lives."

"No question about it: We have to focus on families with very young children—because good health habits are often established at an early age," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Combating obesity is a key component of Take Care New York, our comprehensive plan to improve the health of New Yorkers, and we are thrilled to have the Children's Museum of Manhattan contribute to these efforts. This initiative exemplifies the breadth and depth of CMOM's work with children, families and educators, and their ongoing commitment to children and families with the greatest need. By working together, we can reach our shared goal of a healthier New York for all."

"Thanks to the support of IMLS and other federal agencies and local partners, CMOM will continue to innovate and provide leadership by creating a community where the arts, health, play, creativity and

culture come together to encourage the healthy growth and development of all children,” said Laurie Tisch, Honorary Chair of the Children’s Museum of Manhattan.

“We are honored that Secretary Sebelius, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and directors of IMLS and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the NIH, are joining us today to launch this very exciting and much-needed program. This initiative expands on principles embodied in CMOM’s early childhood programs and is firmly rooted in the belief that establishing positive behaviors early in life obviates more difficult and expensive remediation later on, while providing children with a healthy foundation for learning and lifelong success,” said Andrew Ackerman, Executive Director, Children’s Museum of Manhattan. “Our goal is to help families form the building blocks of healthier lives and ultimately reduce children’s risk of obesity. With the generous IMLS and Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund grants, as well as the inspiration of the **We Can!** initiative, we will be able to help those most in need.”

“This is exactly the kind of project that IMLS likes to support under the National Leadership Grant program, because it will involve a wide range of community partners working together to eradicate children’s obesity,” said Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice, Director, *Institute of Museum and Library Services*. “The Children’s Museum of Manhattan brings keen expertise in translating the latest research and best practices into daily experiences that strengthen family-based learning. We are glad to be an active partner in this effort.”

"As childhood obesity rates continue to threaten the health and well-being of our nation's children local and national leaders are seeking innovative ways to foster healthy eating and physical activity habits that last a lifetime and can help prevent or lower the risk of overweight and obesity. The NIH applauds CMOM's efforts to help blend the scientific content of our **We Can!** messages with the Museum's deep understanding of early childhood learning and its ability to engage with families and community partners," said Dr. Elizabeth G. Nabel, Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH.

“Over the course of the four years that CMOM has run literacy programs at ESHS, parents have shown such enthusiasm and commitment week after week, learning side by side with their children, and we have seen the children respond so positively to all of CMOM’s arts, literacy and science programs,” said John Sanchez, Executive Director of East Side House Settlement. “The Museum has built a wonderful relationship of trust with our families, and I believe our partnership provides a strong foundation for us to deepen our work by helping families at ESHS incorporate healthy behaviors into their daily routines.”

The program also builds on a longstanding partnership with the Louisiana Children’s Museum (LCM), a nationally acclaimed museum with deep roots in the New Orleans community—in 2006, CMOM partnered with LCM to adapt the *PlayWorks™* early learning exhibit, bringing its signature early childhood learning programs to families affected by the Katrina disaster. “Our work with CMOM has proved to be absolutely transformational for LCM and the greater New Orleans community; with Louisiana’s steady battle against childhood obesity, we see this as a timely and crucial initiative,” said Julia Bland, Executive Director of the Louisiana Children's Museum.

About Children’s Museum of Manhattan

Founded in 1973, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan is New York City’s leading cultural institution dedicated solely to kids and families. CMOM inspires children and their families to learn about themselves and a culturally diverse world through unique interactive exhibitions. CMOM presents a full range of activities, exhibits and special performances that stimulate children of all ages. Through multidimensional programs that reach deep into the community, the Museum serves New Yorkers from

all backgrounds. For details on all of CMOM's programs, please visit www.cmom.org or call 212.721.1223.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.ims.gov.

About We Can!TM

We Can!TM (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition!) is a science-based national education program developed by NIH – a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – to help children ages 8-13 stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time. The program offers flexible, turn-key resources complete with partnership ideas and outreach opportunities to unite community organizations. Four of the National Institutes of Health have combined their unique resources and activities to create **We Can!TM**: the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and the National Cancer Institute. For more information, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call toll-free 866-35-WE CAN (866-359-3226).

About East Side House

East Side House, founded in 1891, has served the Mott Haven section of the Bronx since 1963. A staff of 281, including full and part-time teachers, social workers and other experts serve approximately 8,000 residents from 17 locations. For an outline of our organizational structure and partial staff list, click [here](#). After-school and evening programs serve nearly 1,500 children age 2-17. Half of our funding comes from private donations so we can tailor programs to our community.

About Louisiana Children's Museum

The Louisiana Children's Museum (LCM) is the oldest and largest children's museum in Louisiana. Since 1986, it has served as the primary resource for family learning, early childhood development and parental engagement. Welcoming visitors from throughout the state and the Gulf South, LCM engages children and families in memorable, interactive experiences that make growing and learning fun. The Museum also goes beyond its walls to deliver creative, educational resources that impact the greater New Orleans community. Following 9/11, LCM was the first outside organization to connect with CMOM, raising funds for its grief counseling services, offered free of charge to the New York community. Following Hurricane Katrina, CMOM provided valuable guidance to LCM as we reached children and families in disaster recovery in the greater New Orleans community. To learn more about the Louisiana Children's Museum visit www.lcm.org or call 504.523.1357.

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