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Start Walking Treasure Valley!

The American Heart Association's National Start! Walking Day is April 16, 2008

Calls on Americans coast-to-coast to walk for 30 minutes during their workday

Boise, ID April 11, 2008– In late January, the American Heart Association reported that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, much progress has been made in the fight against heart disease and stroke. However, several risk factors have actually been on the rise in recent years and, most alarming, the rate of physical inactivity in this country has only declined by 2.5 percent since 1999. In short, Americans are not getting proper amounts of exercise to combat these health issues. If this trend continues, some of the gains we've made toward a more heart-healthy America could be lost.

To further the concern, research indicates that American jobs have become dangerously more sedentary, and we are working 164 more hours per year than we were 20 years ago. To combat this, the American Heart Association created the Start! movement to work with both employers and the 142 million Americans in the workplace to create a culture of walking before, during or after the workday.

On Wednesday, April 16, 2008, the Start! movement offers a very simple a call-to-action. **The American Heart Association is asking all Americans to incorporate at least 30 minutes of walking into their day, especially while at work. That means us, Idaho!**

Idaho will commemorate the day by a proclamation from Governor 'Butch' Otter. The proclamation reads that "in recognition of the importance of physical activity, April 16, 2008 is proclaimed as National Start! Walking Day." According to Governor Otter all citizens are urged to show their support for walking and the fight against heart disease and to commemorate this day by walking at work.

Many Boise companies are taking it upon themselves to demonstrate their commitment to a healthy work environment and are encouraging employees to wear their sneakers to work and take walks during the day. Staff at St. Luke's Regional Medical center, a proud sponsors of the 2008 Start! Treasure Valley Heart Walk, will be wearing tennis shoes, the color green and encouraging employees to talk a walk during the day to celebrate their companies overall commitment to wellness.

St. Luke's Regional Medical Center will be using National Start! Walking Day as a kick-off to motivate their Heart Walk teams and prepare for the 2008 Start! Treasure Valley Heart Walk on May 31st, in Julia Davis Park. To learn more about the 2008 Start! Treasure Valley Heart Walk, or to get your company involved, contact Sarah Freeman at 208.384.5066 or sarah.freeman@heart.org.

Walking has many proven health benefits. In fact, adults may gain as much as two hours of life expectancy for each hour of regular, vigorous exercise—like very brisk walking—even if they don't begin exercising until middle age.

“Walking is the single most effective way for many sedentary Americans to establish and continue a healthy lifestyle to improve their heart health,” said Paul Powell, chairperson for the Start! Treasure Valley Heart Walk. “Nearly 70 percent of adults get no regular physical activity. Yet contrary to common perceptions, physical activity is just as important in preventing heart disease as other modifiable risk factors including smoking, cholesterol and blood pressure.”

A person is 1.5 to 2.4 times more likely to have coronary heart disease if he or she is inactive.

Start! is sponsored nationally by SUBWAY® Restaurants, Healthy Choice® and AstraZeneca. For more information, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or visit www.heart.org/start.

About the American Heart Association

Founded in 1924, the American Heart Association today is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary health organization dedicated to building healthier lives, free of heart diseases and stroke. These diseases, America's No. 1 and No. 3 killers, and all other cardiovascular diseases, claim nearly 870,000 lives a year. In fiscal year 2006-07, the association invested more than \$554 million in research, professional and public education, advocacy and community service programs to help all Americans live longer, healthier lives. To learn more, call 1-800-AHA-USA1 or visit americanheart.org.

Please see National Start! Walking Key Elements Document for additional details on Start!

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