Combating Obesity: Army, Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation Work Together to Promote Healthy Lifestyle Choices

WASHINGTON D.C. – The U.S. Army Accessions Command (USAAC) and the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation (HWCF) today announced a partnership aimed at countering the trend toward obesity among young people that could – among other downsides – diminish the pool of qualified young Americans available for military duty.

The USAAC and the HWCF signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide a cooperative framework to work together to support America’s young people in the face of youth obesity trends.

“In our recruitment efforts we have found a clear pattern of increased obesity among the nation’s young people – a trend that can hurt many sectors of our society,” said Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley. “Like other national institutions, the Army must show leadership in discouraging obesity and encouraging healthier lifestyle choices among the young people who make up America’s future.”

Both USAAC and HWCF spokespersons agreed on the importance of encouraging “energy balance” among children and young people – not taking in more calories than they burn through physical activity and normal growth.

“We are pleased to announce the U.S. Army as a new partner of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation,” said David Mackay, chair of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation and CEO of Kellogg Company. “Our commitment and dedication to reduce childhood obesity aligns well with the U.S. Army’s and we are delighted to team with them as we work collaboratively in this fight.”

A recent USAAC study by the Lewin Group found that of the American population aged 17-24, 9.3 million (or 29.3% of that demographic cohort) are unqualified for Military service wholly or partially because they are overweight. Of that population, approximately half are disqualified for being overweight and for additional medical reasons.
“As the number of overweight and obese Americans increases, the pool of qualified soldiers shrinks,” says Lt. Gen. Freakley. “And in recent years, the Army has begun to mirror the general public, with the number of soldiers diagnosed as overweight doubling since 2003.”

What specific implications does increased levels of overweight and obese Americans have for the military? The direct impacts include reduction in ability to perform tasks, increased health care costs, increased injuries, higher risk of attaining a related disease, and increased attrition. However, the USAAC is also concerned that the problem will have an impact on other aspects of American society, and that childhood obesity must be a priority.

“Obesity in the workplace – or the recruitment center – shows up first in the classroom,” said HWCF executive director Lisa Gable. “If you want to get a sense of the challenges facing America’s future, consider the fact that childhood obesity rates have more than tripled since 1980.”

The USAAC and the HWCF will participate as appropriate in joint communication, outreach programs, forums, workshops, media activities and other programs to address the increase in obesity and overweight levels. Both organizations are committed to using evidence-based approaches to promote healthier eating, physical activity, daily energy balance and healthy body weight in an effort to restore energy balance among children. Both organizations share a commitment to evidence-based approaches to solve problems, the methodology they will be sharing in their joint initiatives.

The U.S. Army Accessions Command (USAAC) was established by general order on 15 February 2002. It is a subordinate command of TRADOC (U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command) charged with providing integrated command and control of the recruiting for the Army's officer, warrant officer, and enlisted forces. Designed to meet the human resource needs of the Army, the command transforms volunteers into soldiers and leaders for the Army.

The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation is a first-of-its kind coalition that brings together over 100 retailers, food and beverage manufacturers, sporting goods and insurance companies, restaurants, a professional sports association, trade associations and NGOs. The Foundation focuses on activities in the schools, the workplace and the marketplace to promote healthy weight among Americans by balancing the energy they consume with the energy they expend through physical activity.

**HWCF Members:**
1. 6KidsNFit
2. American Council for Fitness and Nutrition Foundation
3. American Dietetic Association Foundation
4. American Wholesale Markets Association
5. Ashley Shaffer, Miss New Jersey
6. Association of Junior Leagues International
7. Baby Goes Pro
8. Be Active Florida
9. Bio Vittoria Limited
10. Brookshire Grocery Company
11. Bumble Bee Foods, LLC
12. California Fresh Fundraisers LLC
13. Campbell Soup Company
14. CATCH
15. Charles the Chef
16. ConAgra Foods
17. Core Wellness Life Coaching LLC
18. Darden Restaurants
19. Del Monte Foods
20. Discovery Education
21. Dish with Eileen
22. Doctors Direct Healthcare
23. Dream Dinners
24. Einstein Noah Restaurant Group
25. Exercise is Medicine
26. Exergame Fitness
27. eXtension
28. Festival Foods (Minnesota)
29. Fields of Dreams
30. FitCity, a division of Learning Well, Inc.
31. Food City
32. Food Marketing Institute
33. General Mills, Inc.
34. GetSweaty
35. Girl Scouts of the USA
36. Global Dairy Platform
37. Gonzalez Northgate Market
38. Good Sports
39. Grains for Health Foundation
40. Grocery Manufacturers Association
41. Harris Teeter, Inc.
42. Hartley Brand (H & H Products Co.)
43. Health-E-tips and JAM School Program
44. Healthcorps (Health + Healing Network)
45. Healthy Dining Finder
46. Healthy Lifestyle Choices
47. Hy-Vee, Inc.
48. IGA, Inc.
49. ILSI Research Foundation
50. Institute of Food Technologists
51. Jax Markets
52. Kellogg Company
53. Kraft Foods Inc.
54. Len Saunders
55. Mars, Incorporated
56. Martin’s Supermarkets
57. McCain Foods
58. McCormick & Company, Inc.
59. MEND
60. National Association for Sport & Physical Education
61. National Business Group on Health (channel partner on Your Wellness Advantage portal)
62. National Wildlife Federation
63. Nestlé USA
64. NFL Play 60
65. Nutralife
66. Our Park Place
67. Outdoor Foundation
68. Passport to Health
69. Paul Pierce’s The Truth on Health
70. PE4life
71. PepsiCo Foundation
72. PepsiCo, Inc.
73. Pink Lady America LLC
74. Playworld Systems
75. Price Chopper
76. Prince William Trails and Streams Coalition
77. PureCircle Limited
78. Ralston Foods/Post Foods, LLC (Ralcorp Holdings, Inc.)
79. Redner’s Markets, Inc.
80. Road Runners Club of America
81. Safeway Inc.
82. Sara Lee Corporation
83. Schnuck Markets, Inc.
84. Shannon Miller, 7 Time Olympic Medalist
85. Shop Rite of Hunterdon Co., Inc.
86. Skogen’s Festival Foods
87. Snack Foods Association
88. SPARK
89. Tate & Lyle
90. The Balancing Act
91. The Coca-Cola Company
92. The Hershey Company
93. The J.M. Smucker Company
94. The National Activity Plan
95. The National Theatre for Children
96. The PGA of America (The Professional Golfers’ Association of America)
97. The Sports Authority
98. Tommy the Tomato
99. TOPS Club, Inc.
100. TriWest Healthcare Alliance
101. Unilever
102. United Supermarkets, Ltd.
103. U.S. Army
104. U.S. Chamber of Commerce
105. U.S. National Physical Activity Plan
106. USA Rugby
107. Wakefern Food Corporation
108. W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Photos of the U.S. Army and Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation signing ceremony:

David Mackay, Chair of Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation Signs MOU with Lieutenant General Benjamin C. Freakley commander of the U.S. Army Accessions Command (www.healthyweightcommit.org)

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