

## **TEAM ESPN'S NEW YOUTH FITNESS INITIATIVE EMPOWERS KIDS TO "PLAY YOUR WAY!"™**

***Initiative offers kids physically active games to play, places to play and  
"stuff to play with"***

Team ESPN, a corporate outreach program of ESPN, Inc., launches its signature youth fitness initiative called *Play Your Way!* designed to promote physical activity among youth, ages 9-17. The three-tier initiative is designed to encourage physical fitness among youth by removing some of the barriers that prevent kids from participating in physical activities, such as lack of motivation, accessible places to play and equipment. *Play Your Way!* provides youth with physically active games to play, places to play and "stuff to play with."

All kids like to play and *Play Your Way!* makes it easier. Team ESPN will develop several programs in local markets to provide fun and exciting materials that give kids an opportunity to take a thing that they love to do - make up games - and add a physically active component to those games. One of the key program elements under *Play Your Way!* is PAGs (physically active games), which will highlight the unusual and nontraditional games that kids create.

Team ESPN will work with DisneyHand, worldwide outreach for The Walt Disney Company, to collaborate on and explore programs with health, fitness, physical education, and youth-serving organizations. Team ESPN will also work with sports teams and leagues to implement *Play Your Way!* activities. In addition, *Play Your Way!* will leverage ESPN's multimedia assets to encourage parents and educators to increase the emphasis they place on physical activity among youth as part of a larger effort to reduce sedentary lifestyles.

"Our *Play Your Way!* youth fitness initiative centers on ESPN's commitment to help our young fans embrace winning lifestyles - a key priority of our Team ESPN outreach program," said George Bodenheimer, president of ESPN, Inc. and ABC Sports. "With this program, we plan to demonstrate the importance of promoting physical activity among youth."

Insufficient physical activity significantly contributes to childhood obesity, an increasingly important public health concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, participation in physical activity declines strikingly as age increases. In fact, among children and teens ages 6-19, almost 9 million are overweight.

"We're seeing a generation of kids who are growing up on the couch instead of the playground," U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona said. "That means that more and more of our children are becoming overweight and that can lead

to significant health risks and emotional distress. I commend ESPN's effort to promote physical activity among our nation's youth and I look forward to working with ESPN to communicate to parents and kids the importance of staying active and staying healthy."

"We applaud ESPN for their creative efforts to improve the health and fitness of our nation's young people through the *Play Your Way!* initiative," said Lynn Swann, chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. "The most important thing parents can do to encourage their children is to be active with them. The activities need not be difficult --they can be fun, stimulating and provide great moments for families not only to be active together but to talk and share other important aspects of their lives."

*Play Your Way!* captures the real sense of empowerment and fun that kids feel when they are free to be their imaginative selves and when they can find their own ways to be physically active. One of the first *Play Your Way!* programs to be introduced will be local sports equipment drives hosted by ESPN Zone restaurants in each of their eight markets, with the first drive taking place in Atlanta, Georgia. Other program elements of *Play Your Way!* in development include a web site, parent and youth resource guides, sports camps, as well as field and playground revitalization projects conducted in coordination with national nonprofit youth organizations, ESPN's affiliates and advertisers, and the national sports leagues.

"We know that kids are already creating and playing interesting, physically active games in playgrounds, youth centers and backyards across America. Since kids learn from one another, we want to create fun and engaging ways for them to share their games," said Juliet Gilliam, director, ESPN Corporate Outreach. "We want to harness the trend and start a movement that leads to healthier kids."

### **About ESPN**

ESPN, Inc., is the world's leading multinational, multimedia sports entertainment company featuring over 40 multimedia assets. The company comprises seven domestic television networks (ESPN, ESPN2, ESPN Classic, ESPNNEWS, ESPN Deportes (launching the end of 2003), ESPN Now, ESPN Today, ESPN HD (a high-definition simulcast service of ESPN), ESPN Regional Television, ESPN International (25 international networks and syndication), ESPN Radio, ESPN.com, ESPN The Magazine, SportsTicker, ESPN Enterprises, ESPN Zones (sports-themed restaurants), and other growing new businesses including ESPN Broadband, ESPN Wireless, ESPN Video-on-Demand, and ESPN Interactive. Based in Bristol, Ct., ESPN is 80 percent owned by ABC, Inc., which is an indirect subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company. The Hearst Corporation holds a 20 percent interest in ESPN.

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