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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Kaiser Permanente, Mills-Peninsula Health Services and  
others join to launch FitFun Program for Better Learning**

Kindergartners-5th graders in Redwood City School District to benefit

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. – February 5, 2009 – This week the FitFun Program for Better Learning is being rolled out to teacher champions from 15 schools in the Redwood City School District (RCSD). The program empowers all kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to provide their students high-quality physical activity throughout the school day. The program will reach more than 6,000 children and more than 300 teachers.

According to Kidsdata.org (12/9/09), more than 30 percent of RCSD 5<sup>th</sup> graders are overweight, and 70 percent do not meet state fitness standards. Due to budget cuts of more than \$5 million, seven physical education teacher positions were eliminated this school year. As a result, District students receive less than half the physical education minutes that the state requires.

Without additional physical activity, these students are at greater risk of developing diabetes, asthma, and other health issues related to obesity. Furthermore, schools that offer consistent physical activity and physical education programs report seeing positive effects on academic achievement, increased concentration, and improved mathematics and language arts test scores. Teachers see reduced classroom disruptive behavior.<sup>1,2</sup>

The Redwood City Education Foundation spearheaded innovative partnerships with Kaiser Permanente and Mills-Peninsula Health Services to fund the rollout of the FitFun program – and with the Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force to provide physical education equipment.

The focus of the FitFun Program for Better Learning is on activities that develop movement skills, social interaction, and a positive self-image. The goals are to create healthier students with greater ability to concentrate on learning, and to enable students to enjoy being

active and develop positive exercise habits that last a lifetime.

The centerpiece of the program is the FitFun Game Guide that was created by members of the School District's Wellness Committee and Playworks (formerly Sports4Kids), with input from teachers, principals, students, and parents. The 100-page guide contains short, enjoyable indoor and outdoor physical activities.

District teachers who have used the Guide find it an easy guide to use first thing in the morning to get the kids focused, at the end of a lesson or project, when a natural break occurs, and whenever the students get fidgety. They appreciate especially that cooperation over competition and "everyone can play" are stressed in this arena of physical activity.

"There is a creative aspect as well," said Kathy McAdams, K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at John Gill elementary school. "While moving as if we were walking through Jello recently, one of the kids said, 'I'm stuck.' Instantly, the other children created a new movement based on getting that child unstuck."

The FitFun for Better Living program is the culmination of three area hospitals – Kaiser Permanente, Mills-Peninsula, and Sequoia Hospital – working together for the benefit of children in the Redwood City School District. It is a key component of the RCSD Wellness Program that began more than three years ago with funding from the Redwood City Education Foundation through grants from Kaiser Permanente and Sequoia Hospital. This year, Kaiser Permanente, Mills-Peninsula Health Services, and the Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force contributed a total of \$22,000 to fund the rollout of the FitFun program, which includes the FitFun Game Guide, a video program overview, and materials to help train District classroom teachers.

Program outcomes, which include significantly improved student fitness and an increase in the quality and quantity of time spent on physical activity in the classroom, will be measured using the California Physical Fitness test results and school self-assessment survey results.

The nonprofit, all-volunteer Redwood City Education Foundation has been partnering for more than 25 years with parents, community members, local businesses, private and public agencies, corporations, and foundations to enrich educational opportunities for the more than 9,000 students in the economically and culturally diverse Redwood City School District. The RCEF counts among its many supporters Oracle, Wells Fargo, Google, Kaiser Permanente,

Mills-Peninsula Health Services, Redwood City Civic Cultural Commission, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Westly Foundation. For more information, visit [www.rcef.org](http://www.rcef.org).

Kaiser Permanente is a nonprofit integrated health care organization with physicians, nurses, and staff working in collaboration to provide high quality care to patients and address the health care needs of the communities it serves. Last year, Kaiser Permanente dedicated over \$600 million to a variety of community programs and agencies in Northern California.

Mills-Peninsula Health Services, with a 100-plus year history of providing care in San Mateo County, operates two major health care facilities – Peninsula Medical in Burlingame, an acute care hospital, and Mills Health Center in San Mateo, a primarily outpatient center.

The Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force’s overall mission is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to develop strategies that will reduce and prevent obesity and other health risks of unhealthy eating and lack of physical activity among all children in San Mateo County.

Playworks is a national nonprofit organization that supports learning by providing safe, healthy and inclusive play and physical activity to schools at recess and throughout the entire school day.

Sequoia Hospital is an accredited, not-for-profit community hospital providing innovative and exceptional healthcare to Bay Area residents. To learn more, please visit: [www.SequoiaHospital.org](http://www.SequoiaHospital.org).

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For additional information:

Kidsdata

<http://www.kidsdata.org/data/region/dashboard.aspx?loc=23&cat=44>

Citations in paragraph 3:

1. Symons, C.W., Cinellie, B., James, T.C., Graft, P., “Bridging Student Health Risks and Academic Achievement Through Comprehensive School Health Programs,” *Journal of School Health*, 1997; 67(6); 220-227.

2. Kolbe, L. J., Green, L., Foreyt, J., et al, "Appropriate functions of health education in schools: improving health and cognitive performance," Krairweer, N., Arasteli, J., Cataldo, M., eds., Child Health Behavior: A Behavioral Pediatrics Perspective, John Wiley, New York, NY, 1986.

FitFun Game Guide

<http://rbsd.schoolwires.net/187710817155648830/site/default.asp>