



# NEWS RELEASE

## St. Charles County Government

Department of Community Health and the Environment

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## WIC GIVES FAMILIES A HEALTHY START

### *Program Combats Obesity, Poor Nutrition in Kids*

*St. Charles County, Missouri* – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly one-third of America's low-income children (aged two to four) are overweight or obese and overweight children are more likely to become obese adults. To combat this, the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services offer the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) that provides nutrition education and supplemental foods to qualifying families.

Obesity causes a significant impact on our community through health risks, social implications and increased health care costs. Obesity is a contributing factor in the development of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, some cancers, high blood pressure, stroke and some breathing or sleeping conditions. In addition, obese children are at higher risk for experiencing social and psychological effects like discrimination and low self-esteem. In 2008, a CDC study reported that medical care costs involving obesity-related treatments were about \$147 billion, and a 2006 report showed that medical spending for obese individuals was \$1,429 greater than that of those deemed to be at normal weight.

A collective effort is underway to combat this growing issue, but individual families must do their part. A first step is to improve eating habits and reducing the intake of sugary foods. Infants receive the best form of nutritional enrichment through breastfeeding, while young children require diets rich in fruits and vegetables. A second step is to become more active, with studies showing that children require at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day to strengthen bones and muscles. The last step is to make lifestyle changes that incorporate these healthier behaviors and increased activity.

To start families on their paths to better health, the WIC program provides specific nutritious supplemental foods and nutrition education at no cost to pregnant and breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants and children up to age five. The program tailors foods for the individual (women, infants and young children have different nutritional requirements) and selects foods that are low in sugar and are good sources of vitamins A, C and D; iron; protein; and calcium.

WIC participants must meet specific income guidelines

([http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/eligibility\\_income.php](http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/eligibility_income.php)) and be determined at nutritional risk by health professionals. Funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the county's WIC program is operated at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles. Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy prohibits the department from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. St. Charles County families interested in applying for WIC resources or in need of more information should call (636) 949-7402.

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