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For More Information Contact

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Charles Ford, Communications (804) 864-7668

Dana Weiss, Division of WIC (804) 864-7839

VIRGINIA NATIVE SCORES TOUCHDOWNS FOR CHICAGO BEARS AND SCORES POINTS IN OBESITY PREVENTION ADS

(RICHMOND, Va.) – Big Stone Gap native Thomas Jones, a star running back with the Chicago Bears football team, is starring in public service announcements urging Virginia youth to be more physically active.

Jones recorded the radio and television spots for the Virginia Department of Health's (VDH) CHAMPION Program, a statewide effort to reduce obesity. The 10-second and 30-second ads are aimed at getting 3 to 5 year olds and 10 to 14 year olds to be more physically active. The spots have aired in the Tidewater region and are being offered to other stations in the state.

“We believe that the solution to obesity begins at the family and community levels,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “We hope the ads with Thomas Jones will motivate young people and their families to be more physically active and adopt healthful eating habits.”

Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It increases the risk of chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes, stroke and several types of cancer. CHAMPION, which stands for the Commonwealth's Healthy Approach and Mobilization Plan for Inactivity, Obesity and Nutrition, began in 2004 to create a united effort among diverse stakeholders and equip communities with the tools to decrease obesity.

A recent VDH report outlines 4,500 barriers and solutions to combating obesity in Virginia. VDH held nine meetings across the state to solicit citizen input on how to lower the Commonwealth's obesity rates. The suggestions have been divided into four categories that include media intervention, nutrition education, community involvement and public policy. VDH is reviewing public and private programs that relate to each of the categories looking for proven practices that can be implemented at the community level. VDH staff are evaluating the practices' cost effectiveness, ease of implementation, cultural sensitivity and scientific soundness. Once effective programs have been identified, VDH staff will train communities to implement them.

To view the PSAs starring Thomas Jones, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on Newsroom.

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