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Salud America! Hosts National Summit on Latino Childhood Obesity Prevention

San Antonio event to feature 17th Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona, Texas Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. and former NBA star Sean Elliott

SAN ANTONIO, Sept. 10, 2009—Dr. Richard H. Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the United States, will call for greater research and policy action to help prevent obesity among Latino children in a keynote address today at the Scientific Summit of *Salud America!*, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children, based at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

For its inaugural summit, *Salud America!* has united more than 200 researchers and community leaders from across the country to address this critical health issue.

Other special guests at the summit, being held September 10-11 at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, include Texas Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr.; Sean Elliott, a former San Antonio Spur; and his wife Claudia Zapata, a *San Antonio Express-News* health columnist. Champion cyclist Lance Armstrong will deliver a personal video greeting.

Although the event is by invitation only, media members are welcome to attend.

The rest of the agenda features a dozen panels and sessions with top researchers, policy-makers and others with expertise in policy, the built environment, nutrition, etc.

“We believe this meeting will increase awareness of the challenge of childhood obesity among Latinos, enhance knowledge of the work being done to reduce the epidemic and create opportunities for collaboration,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of *Salud America!* and the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the Health Science Center. “We want to create a sense of inspiration and motivation to push improvements in policy, the built environment and beyond.”

Latino youths suffer disproportionately from obesity and are at greater risk of related health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease. A national study published last year showed that 38 percent of Mexican-American children and adolescents are overweight or obese, compared with 31.9 percent of all children ages 2 to 19.

But there is a lack of research on effective interventions focusing on Latinos.

In 2007, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) established *Salud America!* to remedy that gap. The program aims to increase the number of Latino researchers seeking policy and environmental solutions to obesity among Latino children and to connect those researchers to policy-makers and community leaders engaged on the

issue. Since its inception, *Salud America!* has recruited more than 1,450 academics, researchers, community leaders and policy-makers to its network.

In 2008, more than 300 network members participated in the process that helped establish the program's agenda and led to this summer's funding of 20 pilot grants for research on reducing and preventing obesity among Latino youths. The investigators funded through these grants will be at the Summit to discuss their projects.

Also, many RWJF officials will attend: Drs. James S. Marks, senior vice president, Laura Leviton, special advisor for evaluation, and John Govea, senior program officer.

FULL SUMMIT DETAILS:

WHEN: Thursday, September 10, 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

- The welcome by Dr. Amelie Ramirez and keynote speech by Dr. Richard Carmona are scheduled from 9:00 to 10:35 a.m.
- Remarks by Sean Elliott and Claudia Zapata are set for 2:15 p.m.

Friday, September 11, 8:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

- A panel featuring Sen. Eddie Lucio is scheduled for 8:30 a.m.

WHERE: Sheraton Gunter Hotel
205 E. Houston Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205

AGENDA: A full event description and agenda can be found at <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=a1d8aaa7-f07d-48a6-81c3-8bba7e89bd76>.

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Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino researchers, policy-makers and community leaders engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Visit www.salud-america.org.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.