



For Immediate Release

*Getting “KidSTRONG” – Increasing fitness among local youth*

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EAGLE-VAIL — Remember when you were a child growing up, playing pick up games in the park or running through the neighborhoods until the sun went down? Today, more and more often children are spending less time outdoors, and more time playing video games and watching TV, missing that fun, active time that we all embraced as children.

Colorado is one of the fittest states in our nation, but that does not mean that all children have access to sports and recreational opportunities. Fortunately, in the Vail Valley, the Youth Foundation has stepped in to ensure that children are getting time to be active and physically fit through their newest initiative, KidSTRONG, Kids Stronger Through Recreational Opportunities & Nutritional Guidance. During existing Youth Foundation after school programs, elementary and middle school students are participating in weekly programming throughout the year that increases physical activity, exposes youth to new recreational opportunities and teaches youth and their families how to make healthy lifestyle choices. The KidSTRONG initiative is the result of a collaborative between the Youth Foundation, Eagle County Schools and Vail Valley Medical Center, as well as the Colorado Health Foundation working together to identify ways to fulfill the needs for local youth and increase opportunities for them to become physically active.

For more than a thousand children throughout Eagle County, the Youth Foundation after-school programs are a home away from home during after school hours. The program has become an integral part of the Youth Foundation and offers a myriad of enrichment opportunities. From art and music exploration, to self esteem building through physical fitness activities, children that are involved in The Youth Foundation programs are becoming engaged in their community and empowered to be our community's greatest resource. Through a generous grant made by the Colorado Health Foundation, the Youth Foundation has made it a priority to increase physical activity by 200% among all Youth Foundation participants through the after school programs.

“Perhaps the single most important time to increase physical activity and decrease sedentary activities such as television watching and computer time is after school between 3 and 6 p.m. This is a time when children can be active, but often are not. Many children are inactive during this time period through no fault of their own, mostly because parents are concerned about their children’s safety. Parents must help their children find safe and enjoyable opportunities to be active during this time period. Unless a special time is set aside each day, the opportunity to be active will slip away because barriers to physical activity are often great,” notes Dr. Charles Corbin of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

Through the KidSTRONG programs, participants are exposed to a variety of physical fitness opportunities and encouraged to try new things. Participants might be playing soccer and learning agility skills one day, playing fun fitness games and learning about nutritional habits another day, and learning the concentration of tae kwon do and increasing their flexibility, or gaining life skills through the game of golf yet another day. The fitness opportunities are endless!

Mike Santambrogio, the Fitness and Nutrition Coordinator for the Youth Foundation sees the positive impact that the KidSTRONG program is bringing to the kids throughout the valley. "Just the other day I had a child come up to me and tell me all about their trip to the grocery store with his family. He was so excited to let me know that he was helping his mom make better choices by reading the nutrition labels on some of the foods they were purchasing."

"The excitement that the kids bring to the programs really evokes such an amazing feeling," he said, "providing the kids with a healthy, positive environment where they are learning some basic, yet fundamental choices around health and fitness is truly one of the best feelings that I have ever experienced, it really is gratifying."

During the first phase of this program, the Youth Foundation plans to focus on after school programming, with a long term goal of establishing a coordinated approach with the schools, families, nonprofits, local government and community. CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health), a highly researched and evidence-based program provides the curricular foundation for the KidSTRONG program. CATCH evaluation tools are utilized for pre and post surveys among all participants at all levels of programming and will allow the Youth Foundation to really track the progress the participants are making.

To learn more about the Youth Foundation or to get involved with the After School Enrichment programs contact Lee Jones at 970-763-7000 or go to the web-site [www.theyouthfoundation.org](http://www.theyouthfoundation.org).

#### **About Our Partners:**

The Youth Foundation's (TYF) mission is: "Preparing children in need for success in life through education and recreational opportunities." TYF impacts youth with positive mentorship, community interaction and recreational applications that inspire self-confidence, friendship and integrity in the hearts of participants. Everyone involved is charged with helping young people discover their individual gifts and qualities which will help them become happy individuals and good community participants. Our continued goals for 2009-2010 focus on deepening our impact both socially and academically for all children involved. Enhancing our existing program with a comprehensive evidence based physical fitness and nutrition component through KidSTRONG helps us to deliver the healthy lifestyles that change long term health statistics. Please visit [www.theyouthfoundation.org](http://www.theyouthfoundation.org) for more information.

The Colorado Health Foundation works to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation by increasing the number of Coloradans with health insurance, ensuring they have access to quality, coordinated care and encouraging healthy living. The Foundation invests in the community through grants and initiatives to health-related nonprofits that focus on these goals, as well as operating medical education programs to increase the health care workforce. The Foundation's assets of more than \$900 million include an investment portfolio as well as an ownership interest in Denver's HealthONE hospital system. For more information, please visit [www.ColoradoHealth.org](http://www.ColoradoHealth.org)