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## **Community Health Works, Houston and Bibb County Schools, and *HealthTeacher* partner to teach kids health literacy**

MACON, GA (November 11, 2009) – Community Health Works announced that teachers in Houston and Bibb County will be the first of seven central Georgia school districts to have access to HealthTeacher’s comprehensive K-12 online health education curriculum with the goal of improving the health literacy of children and teens in Central Georgia. The partnership will eventually encompass approximately 4,200 teachers in 105 participating schools across 7 districts.

This initiative supports Community Health Works’ mission of a *regional integration of whole person healthcare*, by fostering the health literacy of nearly 66,000 local children and teens. Community Health Works is sponsoring the HealthTeacher curriculum and teacher training for participating schools for three years as part of its efforts to improve the health of children and teens in the Central Georgia region.

“Our unique partnership with area schools and HealthTeacher combines the efforts and resources of the public and private sector to further one of Community Health Works’ primary strategic goals, improving consumer health and health literacy,” says Gregory J. Dent, President & CEO of Community Health Works. “HealthTeacher’s approach to health literacy on topics such as nutrition and exercise will be an excellent resource for students and teachers as our community takes a stand against childhood obesity and its harmful effects on lifelong health. We hope to expand this program in the future to include the entire twenty-five county region of central Georgia.”

Many high-risk health behaviors often are established during childhood and adolescence, which extend into adulthood. These behaviors can be addressed and prevented with proper education. According to the Centers for Disease Control in the *2007 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System*, Georgia students are at an equal or greater risk of current obesity, smokeless tobacco use, episodic heavy drinking as well as lifetime inhalant use when compared to U.S. students.

“We are proud to be working with two leaders in health advocacy and health literacy education to further our efforts to improve the health of our students and community,” says Sharon Patterson, Superintendent of Bibb County Schools. “The HealthTeacher curriculum is designed to be simple and easy to use for our educators. With lessons relevant to today’s world and aligned to National Health Education Standards, this program will help our teachers adopt health literacy education seamlessly into their everyday classroom practices.”

According to a 2009 report by Trust for America's Youth and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America 2009*, Georgia has the third highest obesity rate with 37.3% of Georgia's children ages 10 -17 being obese or overweight. The study finds that in 30 states, the childhood obesity rate is reaching epidemic proportions with 30% of state's children being overweight.

“This partnership will empower our teachers and community to have a greater impact on the overall health of our students and support our current health education initiatives,” says David Carpenter, Superintendent of Houston County Schools. “One of the greatest values of this program is the comprehensive training and support our educators receive while adopting the HealthTeacher curriculum in the classroom. Community Health Works and HealthTeacher are not simply providing our teachers a valuable resource, but are helping them make small additions to their classroom practices that have the potential for significant life-long impact on the health of our students.”

Studies show that it's not just the prevalence of childhood obesity that should be a concern:

- 23.9% of children through age 17 have ridden with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.
- 32% of children through age 17 have been offered, sold or given an illegal drug while on school property
- 37.7% of children through age 17 have had at least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during the last 30 days before the survey
- 81% of children through age 17 ate fruits and vegetables less than five times per day (CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2007)

“Community Health Works embraces whole person healthcare which fits naturally with our program to improve health literacy and empower children to make positive health and wellness choices for their future success” says Scott McQuigg, Chief Executive Officer of HealthTeacher. “Community Health Works is supporting teachers by underwriting the health education resources they need to make a positive lifetime impact on the health and wellness of children in Houston and Bibb Counties.”

The HealthTeacher curriculum covers 10 key topic areas designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills needed pursue healthy lifestyles throughout their lives. Designed for K-12 teachers and students, the HealthTeacher curriculum is aligned with the National Health Education Standards that requires instruction in five key areas:

- Health
- Nutrition
- Mental health
- Injury prevention
- Tobacco, alcohol and drug use

### **About Community Health Works**

Community Health Works is a 501(c)3 not for profit company set upon transforming healthcare in Central Georgia. The organization operates many programs to increase access to care for the uninsured and underinsured. Community Health Works is “a bold organization seeking innovative health solutions and providing compassionate advocacy for people financially compromised by their medical needs, while reducing the burdens on local health providers.” To learn more, visit [www.chwg.org](http://www.chwg.org).

### **About HealthTeacher**

HealthTeacher is a leading provider of online health, wellness and prevention education resources for kindergarten through 12th grade and is used by more than 20,000 teachers nationwide. HealthTeacher provides teachers the resources, tools and background material to educate students about making healthy lifestyle choices through more than 300 lesson plans aligning to the National Health Education Standards. HealthTeacher helps establish community-based health literacy collaboratives by developing partnerships between healthcare organizations, businesses, community leaders and schools to address the growing issues affecting the health status of children. To learn more, visit [www.healthteacher.com](http://www.healthteacher.com).

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