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'Chicago Fit Ball' to Support America's Journey to a Healthy Weight & Honor Chef Art Smith

Chicago Trading Company Leads Business Community's Support

(Chicago, IL) On Wednesday March 23, the first-ever "Fit Ball" will be held in Chicago by the Campaign to End Obesity to support efforts to reverse one of America's costliest diseases. Currently, Illinois ranks fourth in the percentage of obese and overweight children in the U.S., and among adults, the state saw its obesity rate reach 26.6 percent in 2009. Concerned business and civic leaders will come together – led by support from the Chicago Trading Company – to raise resources that can support the Campaign's work to educate policymakers about what they can do to address obesity in Chicago and around the nation.

The Fit Ball, whose other major sponsors include Abbott Laboratories, Humana, the National Restaurant Association and OptionsExpress, will honor famed Chicago chef Art Smith with its first-ever Community Health Champion Award, presented for outstanding leadership in addressing the urgent challenges posed by rising obesity rates at the community level. In 2003, Chef Smith founded Common Threads, a non-profit organization that teaches low-income children to cook wholesome and affordable meals. In addition, Chef Smith has utilized his celebrity to teach all Americans to incorporate and enjoy healthful practices in their everyday lives.

Nationally, two-thirds of U.S. adults and nearly one in three children struggle with overweight and obesity, a disease which threatens to reduce the lifespan of today's children, who are likely to live shorter lives than their parents. The obesity epidemic consumes some \$168 billion a year in health care spending, and this figure is projected to double over the decade. Allowing current obesity rates to continue unchecked will push the cost to \$320 billion annually, according to a recent McKinsey study.

Funds from the Fit Ball will help to build and support a national network of community leaders — parents, educators, patients, community organizations, political leaders and others— who share the desire to work at the local and national levels to help America's children and adults reach or remain at a healthy weight.

Ticket sales are available online at www.obesitycampaign.org.

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About the Campaign to End Obesity

The effects of the nation's obesity epidemic are immense: taxpayers, businesses, communities and individuals spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year due to obesity, including an estimated \$168 billion in medical costs. By bringing together leaders from across industry, academia and public health with policymakers and their advisors, the Campaign to End Obesity provides the information and guidance that decision-makers need to make the changes necessary to reverse one of the nation's costliest and most prevalent diseases.