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**AARP AND THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION LAUNCH
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INITIATIVE TO GET AMERICANS 50+ ACTIVE FOR LIFE™**

*Pilots in Richmond, VA and Madison, WI aimed at reducing premature death and disease.
Campaign will urge activity at least 30 Minutes a Day, Five Days a Week or more.*

(Washington, DC) – AARP and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced a joint campaign to increase physical activity among Americans age 50 and over.

The launch of *Active for Life™* is based on substantial evidence that regular physical activity reduces the risk of dying prematurely, as well as the risk of high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes. There are escalating health consequences associated with inactivity among older Americans. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), four out of ten Americans age 45-64 are sedentary, increasing to six out of ten for those 75 and older.

Active for Life™ will be pilot tested in Richmond, Virginia and Madison, Wisconsin, with major advertising, media, advocacy and community-based interventions over the next year. The program seeks to increase the number of people 50+ who engage in at least 30 minutes of activity a minimum of five days a week. The two-city campaign is being supported by a \$4.3 million grant to AARP from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and matched by \$2.5 million from AARP.

“Approximately 80 million people will turn 50 over the next decade. We will work through our 35 million member network to promote increased physical activity as one of the most important things Americans 50+ can do to improve their health,” said Bill Novelli, AARP’s chief executive officer.

“This campaign will show older Americans that it can be fun and easy to get moving and make physical activity part of their everyday lives,” said J. Michael McGinnis, MD, senior vice president and director of RWJF’s health group. “Staying active reduces the risk of premature death and certain diseases. With each passing year, we should be more active, not less” McGinnis continued.

Older adults who engage in regular physical activity tend to have improved cardiovascular health, better balance, and increased joint mobility. Yet despite a growing body of scientific evidence indicating that physical activity can contribute to increased years of active independent life, reduced disability, and improved quality of life, people 50 and over are becoming increasingly inactive.

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The *Active for Life*TM program is designed to provide practical help to this inactive group. AARP conducted a nationwide survey of 2,000 people age 50 and over, and found that while 63 percent say that exercise is the best thing they can do for their health, a large majority of respondents want information and support to help them get moving. Nearly three-fourths (74%) are interested in learning how to exercise safely, 71 percent want help staying motivated, and 66 percent state an interest in learning how to set realistic goals.

With this in mind, *Active for Life*TM has engaged Richmond and Madison community organizations representing city health departments; recreation, parks and fitness centers; faith-based groups; non-profit organizations and representatives from local businesses. With local AARP support, these community partners are developing and implementing multimedia campaigns combining paid advertising and earned media; developing and distributing community resource directories; and building physical activity web sites.

The *Be Active for Life Handbook*, a self-directed consumer guide with tools and strategies to help people become more physically active, will be distributed. Volunteers in each community will audit their city's walkability and bikeability and advocate for needed changes. In Richmond, *Project Joy*, a program of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Promotion, will be implemented as part of the campaign. The program is a joint partnership with churches to reach out to African-American women to promote physical activity. These products and activities are part of a comprehensive initiative to address the barriers faced by adults 50 and over.

The research also revealed that a link exists between regular exercise and health. While nearly two-thirds (63%) of those who are in very good health say they have exercised regularly or fairly regularly throughout life, roughly the same percentage (66%) of those in fair or poor health say they have either not exercised, or have only done so occasionally.

"In the past 50 years or so, we've essentially engineered physical activity out of our daily lives. From the way buildings and communities are designed to the dependence on the car for transportation, to the advent of television and computers, we've become more passive than active in the way we live, and that needs to change," said Robin Mockenhaupt, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

AARP and RWJF will be conducting an ongoing evaluation of the campaign, measuring changes in behavior during the one-year pilot phase and after its completion. For more information about *Active for Life*TM, visit www.aarp.org/activeforlife.

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Active for Life™ is just one of several initiatives that AARP is involved in that addresses the unique lifestyles of those over 50. Others include the TriUmp Classic 50+ Swim-Bike-Run, a national triathlon series designed for this age group. Visit www.aarp.org/triumph for more information.

As part of its *Active for Life™* efforts to promote and increase physical activity in the 50 and over population, RWJF is also funding an \$8.7 million four-year initiative in which up to eight grants will be awarded to community institutions to test the effectiveness of promising interventions to promote physical activity among mid-life and older persons at health risk because of their sedentary lifestyles. The *Active for Life™* national program office is based at Texas A&M University Health Science Center's School of Rural Public Health. More information is available at www.activeforlife.info.

AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include AARP Webplace at www.aarp.org, AARP Modern Maturity and My Generation magazines, the monthly AARP Bulletin and Segunda Juventud, a quarterly, bilingual newspaper. Active in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the attitude that age is just a number and life is what you make it.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to basic healthcare at reasonable cost; to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse -tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. Active for Life™ is a trademark of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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