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For more information, contact:
Maureen Cozine, RWJF News Line, 609/627-5937
Brigid Sanner, Active for Life, 214/553-0621

For Immediate Release

NEW GRANTS PROGRAM TO GET OLDER ADULTS MOVING

Active for Life seeks proposals to increase physical activity among those 50 and over

Princeton, N.J., January 23, 2002 – In an effort to increase physical activity among mid-life and older adults, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today launched a new program, *Active for Life: Improving Physical Activity Levels in Adults Age 50 and Older*. The four-year, \$8.7-million grants program, to be administered through the School of Rural Public Health (SRPH), part of The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, will award up to eight grants to local, state, or regional organizations that have experience working to address the health needs of mid-life and older adults.

"This exciting new program reflects our vision for how we can enhance health, productivity and vitality as we age," said J. Michael McGinnis, M.D., senior vice president and director of RWJF's health group.

"Increasing physical activity is one of the most effective behavior changes people, particularly older adults, can make to improve their health," said Robin Mockenhaupt, Ph.D., senior program officer at RWJF. "Yet for many people over age 50, physical activity is simply not a part of their routine." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 34 percent of the U.S. population age 50 and older is sedentary.

Over a four-year period, each *Active for Life* grantee site will recruit 1,000 people age 50 and older to participate in programs that will test, replicate, and expand a research tested method to increase physical

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activity among mid-life and older adults at the community level. The grantees will work with one of two model strategies that help participants incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. The first model uses facilitated group discussions to address overcoming the barriers to integrating physical activity into everyday living; the second uses telephone calls and mailings to follow up on support and guidance provided through individually tailored programs.

(more)

“These are models that have been successful in highly controlled research settings,” said *Active for Life* national program director Marcia Ory, Ph.D., professor at the SRPH. “We are eager to investigate how effective the interventions are for mid-life and older adults when implemented in real-world community settings with more diverse populations.

"The SRPH is placing an increased emphasis on the health of the elderly," said Ciro V. Sumaya, M.D., M.P.H.T.M., dean of the SRPH. "The *Active for Life* program fits with this new focus."

More specific application guidelines are available in the *Active for Life* call for proposals, available on the web at www.activeforlife.info.

Potential grant applicants should direct any questions to Diane Dowdy, Ph.D., *Active for Life* deputy director, via email at activeforlife@srph.tamu.edu, or by telephone at 979/458-4202.

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 health care 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.

The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health is the first school of public health to focus on the often-unique health issues and needs of rural populations. The mission of the School of Rural Public Health is to improve the health of communities with emphasis on rural and other underserved populations, through education, research, service, outreach and creative partnerships. The School is part of The Texas A&M University System Health Science Center. Texas A&M is the only land-grant institution in the state of Texas.