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\$1.1 MILLION PepsiCo FOUNDATION GRANT SUPPORTS FAMILY HEALTH SELF-EMPOWERMENT PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

GAINESVILLE, Fla. – A University of Florida pilot program to increase health-promoting behaviors and prevent and modify obesity in low income and ethnic minority families recently received more than \$1.1 million from The PepsiCo Foundation.

The program – called the Family Health Self-Empowerment Project – is designed to promote healthier lifestyles among children, adolescents, and their caregivers, particularly those who are overweight or obese. The PepsiCo Foundation’s grant will enable the university to create a model program to help families across the nation deal with the obesity crisis.

Dr. Carolyn Tucker, UF Distinguished Alumni Professor in the Departments of Psychology, Pediatrics, and Community Health and Family Medicine, and the program’s principal investigator, said the three-year research and intervention project was initially geared toward families in Gainesville, Fla. and Ocala, Fla., but now, thanks to The PepsiCo Foundation’s gift, communities throughout the United States will be used as test sites. More than 600 volunteer families will participate in the project.

“Dr. Tucker is conducting a rigorous, evidence-based health and wellness pilot focused on motivation and obstacles,” said Nancy Green, PepsiCo vice president, nutrition and policy. “These two factors are key to rolling out successful healthy lifestyle programs.”

According to Tucker, the project has three goals: First, to demonstrate the effectiveness of an intervention model program to facilitate healthy lifestyles and prevent and modify obesity; second, to produce a DVD version of the program’s workshops for national distribution; and third, to gain a better understanding of the variables that influence lifestyle choices.

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PepsiCo. Grant for UF Family Health Project – ADD ONE

The program consists of five bi-weekly workshops that include topics such as how to make healthy choices, prepare ethnic foods in healthy ways, and manage stress and depression that often lead to unhealthy behaviors. Participants also self-monitor their eating, activity level and time in active television watching. Material developed as a result of the project will be disseminated nationwide.

“The workshops are the first of their kind in that they will involve families teaching families and address the big problem of getting motivated and staying motivated,” said Tucker. “And to make sure the workshops are culturally sensitive, they will include workshop leaders from various ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds.”

The short-term goal of the project is to identify the motivators of and barriers to health-promoting behaviors, according to Tucker. “In the long term we will determine if any positive effects of workshop participation are maintained five months later.”

The first implementation stage of the project will begin in the second week of September.

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***Image of Dr. Carolyn Tucker attached to electronic version of news release. To request copy of image to be emailed, requests should be directed to cbrazda@ufl.edu**