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Kraft Foods Foundation Expands Salsa, Sabor Y Salud Healthy Lifestyles Program; Brings 'Food, Fun And Fitness' To More Latinos

National partnership with YMCA of the USA and NLCI will reach thousands in 130 communities

NORTHFIELD, Ill., Sept 22, 2010 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Small changes can bring big success. And small changes start at home with the family. That's the inspiration for the Kraft Foods Foundation three-year, \$1.5 million partnership with the National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI) and YMCA of the USA to expand the successful *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* (Food, Fun and Fitness) healthy lifestyles program.

Kraft Foods has invested more than \$6 million in the program over the past eight years in collaboration with NLCI, helping reach more than 32,000 Latinos across the United States. Now, Kraft Foods Foundation is stepping up its efforts to make a delicious difference in communities through the collaboration with NLCI and the Y. Through the expanded program, the three partners hope to reach up to 13,000 Latinos in 130 communities over the next three years.

Through the work with NLCI and the Y, the Kraft Foods Foundation is bringing a unique solution to help address the growing obesity rates and levels of inactivity in Latino children. NLCI is the only national organization that concentrates exclusively on young Latinos and is committed to working within the community to find solutions to the challenges they face. The Y is committed to helping more kids reach their potential, helping more families and individuals achieve better health outcomes, and encouraging everyone to get involved and make the community a better place. The Y is an ideal partner for the program because they have the presence and expertise to mobilize communities for positive change.

The program kicks off in January 2011 at Ys in Belleville, Ill.; Dallas; Denver; Elgin, Ill.; Houston; Long Beach, Calif.; Longmont, Colo.; New York; Tampa, Fla.; and Worcester, Mass. The program will expand to 130 Ys nationwide by 2012.

"*Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is just one of the ways Kraft Foods and its Foundation are delivering on our commitment to health and wellness. Promoting healthy lifestyles is critical to that commitment," said Rhonda Jordan, President of Global Health & Wellness at Kraft Foods. "Latino children are at greater risk for childhood obesity. Through our partnership with NLCI and the Y, we'll be able to get even more Latino families involved in this award-winning program and, importantly, help them lead healthier lives."

First national program of its kind

Developed in 2002 by NLCI in partnership with Kraft Foods, *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is the first national program of its kind to address the growing obesity rates and inactivity levels among Latino children. According to the American Medical Association, 38.2 percent of Hispanic children ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese, compared with 31.7 percent of all children those ages. And, more Hispanic children ages 2 to 11 are obese than their peers.

Salsa, Sabor y Salud addresses the issue by teaching families the importance of achieving balance through healthier food choices and increased levels of physical activity.

"Since 2002, *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* has engaged Latino families with culturally relevant content built around traditions and culture. The program promotes hands-on learning about making nutritious food choices and increasing physical activity," said Josie Garza, Executive Director, NLCI. "The expansion to include the Y will help us reach even more Latinos across the country."

"The Y has a longstanding commitment to addressing the most pressing needs of our community, and childhood obesity is a top priority," said Neil Nicoll, President and CEO of YMCA of the USA. "We are thrilled to collaborate with Kraft Foods Foundation and NLCI to provide *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* to Ys nationwide that we can collectively bring more families together to learn healthy habits and achieve greater health and well-being."

Getting the whole family involved

Family gatherings are central to Latino culture. *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is a unique program because it builds on this tradition with creative, comprehensive and culturally relevant tools designed to get the whole family involved in building a healthy lifestyle. Created for Latinos by Latinos, the eight-week bilingual curriculum has families celebrating traditions, finding better-for-you ways to prepare favorite recipes, and getting up on their feet moving.

It's based on four messages:

- Eat from all food groups every day
- Be sensible about portions
- Be physically active every day
- Take small steps for success

The curriculum has proven to make a positive impact on participants. According to a University of Illinois evaluation of the program, 93 percent of the participants surveyed said they were eating more nutritious meals. And they reported an increase in the number of days they were exercising from 2 to 3.5. The program also received the President's Circle Award for Nutrition Education from the American Dietetic Association in 2007.

Addressing a critical concern

Sylvia Melendez-Klinger, registered dietician and well-known Latino health expert, is helping spread the word about the *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* program, highlighting the new partnership during Hispanic Heritage Month and National Childhood Obesity Awareness month.

"Childhood obesity among Latinos is an issue that demands ongoing attention, education and advocacy," said Sylvia Melendez-Klinger. "What I like about the *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* program is that it offers healthier food choices compatible with the lifestyle and cuisine of Latino families while bringing families together for fun physical activities."

The expansion of the *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* program is a continuing demonstration of Kraft Foods' commitment to health and wellness. Earlier this year, the company announced plans to significantly increase the whole grain content in its leading *Nabisco* cracker brands, more than doubling the amount of whole grain currently used across the *Nabisco* portfolio. In addition, the company is reducing sodium by an average of 10% across its North American portfolio of products, including crackers. And over the past five years, Kraft Foods has reformulated about one in four products in the United States to make them better for consumers.

Kraft Foods Support of Hunger and Healthy Lifestyles

Kraft Foods is taking a stand when it comes to fighting hunger and promoting healthy lifestyles. The company, along with the Kraft Foods Foundation, is addressing food insecurity through an integrated approach to affect lasting change. The company is meeting the immediate needs of the hungry with direct aid through financial contributions and donations of food. Kraft Foods and its Foundation have donated more than \$1 billion in cash and food to organizations since 1990. In the United States alone, they've provided over one billion servings of food during the past 10 years.

About NLCI

The National Latino Children's Institute was founded in 1997 as a national non-profit organization; and is the only national Latino organization whose primary focus is Latino children. NLCI's mission is to focus the nation's attention on issues and challenges facing young Latinos and to assist communities in finding solutions. NLCI carries out its mission by working with community organizations and national partners. Our history and expertise in working with the Latino community, as well as the staff's commitment and strong relationships across the country, makes NLCI ideally suited to create and implement strategies that eliminate barriers to building healthy communities for young Latinos by incorporating the principles of the National Latino Children's Agenda.

About the Y

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofit, strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,687 Ys engage 21 million men, women and children - regardless of age, income or background - to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. ymca.net

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SOURCE: Kraft Foods