



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

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**Let's Lighten Up Alabama One Step at a Time; register before Feb. 27**

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Miriam Gaines  
(334) 206-5226

Marc T. Riker  
Alabama Sports Festival  
(334) 280-0065

Lack of physical activity and improper nutrition are linked to being overweight. Our society has become very sedentary, especially in Alabama. Adults and children are less active than were previous generations. In fact, approximately 43 percent of adolescents watch more than two hours of television each day. Girls are less active than boys and they become even more sedentary as they move through adolescence.

Numerous health-related organizations have recommended increased physical activity in order to decrease overweight and associated risk factors. Numerous reports have evaluated the relationship between adult work performance or student academic performance and health behavior. These studies demonstrated that proper nutrition and physical activity are linked to improved mental alertness, academic achievement and self-esteem.

Miriam Gaines, director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit, Alabama Department of Public Health, said, "Strong evidence exists that sedentary behaviors, such as prolonged TV viewing, are directly related to obesity and the risk of disease. Walking is an activity that is often recommended as a physical activity for all ages, and a partnership of interested agencies is promoting it for the third consecutive year."

The Alabama Sports Festival, in association with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Governors Commission on Physical Fitness, began offering Lighten Up Alabama in 2004.

Lighten Up Alabama is a 10-week statewide fun health and fitness program designed to promote physical activity and good nutrition. The goal is to have an impact on individual behavior and the culture of work sites and communities. Anyone can form a team of 2-10 people. Last year, participants accumulated more than 17,000 activity miles, the total equivalent of walking from Montgomery, Ala., to Los Angeles, Calif., eight times.

Ms. Gaines said, "So help support your peers in shaping up by encouraging fellow employees, parishioners, and neighbors to join you in forming a team. Together we can Lighten Up Alabama!"

Lighten Up Alabama works because it incorporates the team concept, it focuses on behavior change rather than a quick fix, and it is inexpensive—just \$1.50 a week. The total cost to participate is \$15 per person. Besides the weekly tips, each entrant receives a T-shirt at no additional charge and discount entry in the 2006 Alabama Sports Festival State Games Volkswalks. The program starts Feb. 27. To register and for more information, go to [www.LightenUpAlabama.org](http://www.LightenUpAlabama.org) or call (334) 280-0065.

Lighten Up Alabama is part of the Lighten Up America team wellness program that is designed to get America to "lighten up." The Alabama Sports Festival is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, founded at the request of the United States Olympic Committee in 1982, and is a Charter Member of the National Congress of State Games.

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