Helping Children and Youth Stay Healthy

**The Need:** In North Carolina, the prevalence of overweight in children increased 40 percent among 5- to 11-year olds between 1995 and 2000. One in five 5- to 11-year-olds is overweight, while one in four 12- to 18-year-olds is overweight. Each year more than 400,000 deaths are attributed to unhealthy eating and inactivity. Overweight and obesity increase the risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers.

**Serving the Need:** To help school-age children learn the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, North Carolina Cooperative Extension partnered with the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Division of Public Health to introduce two programs: “Eat Smart: North Carolina’s Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School” and “Move More: North Carolina’s Recommended Standards for Physical Activity in School.”

The two programs recommend guidelines that schools can follow to improve the content of food offered in all settings in school and to improve students’ physical activity level. Both programs offer various levels of compliance that schools can strive for in their nutrition and physical activity efforts.

**Impact beyond North Carolina:** As a result of the Eat Smart standards, the state legislature funded a no-risk pilot program for seven elementary schools to fully implement the standards at the superior level. Following the pilot program, the legislature mandated that the state School Board implement nutrition standards for all elementary schools in North Carolina, based in part on the Eat Smart standards. The new standards will be implemented in 2008 in all North Carolina elementary schools.

Program leaders believe that the Eat Smart Recommended Standards for All Foods Served in School kicked off a more focused dialog about what is served in schools, resulting ultimately in stronger mandated recommendations.

**For more information, contact:** Dr. Carolyn Dunn, Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences, 919.515.9142 or carolyn_dunn@ncsu.edu