

Press Release
For Immediate Attention
November 3, 2004



STEP TOGETHER NEW ORLEANS CELEBRATES PASSAGE OF BOND ISSUE

New Orleans, La. - Representatives of **Step Together New Orleans, (STEPS)** say voter approval of the \$260-million general obligation bond proves that New Orleanians are taking steps in the right direction. The passage of the bond issue on Tuesday, November 2, 2004 provides an essential link between the Steps initiatives and the community's interest in their own health.

As a community-based, public health effort, Steps has been funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through a five year grant to promote healthier living in New Orleans. Encouraging daily physical activity, increased vegetable and fruit consumption and less snacking are three goals of the Steps plan. To get our community more physically active – New Orleans needs to be more bikeable and walkable. The improvements identified in the City's plan will help to make that happen.

Four million dollars have been allocated to create bike lanes and routes. Other monies will help to repair sidewalks and improve neutral grounds to meet national standards. These changes are integral to increased pedestrian and bike safety and in turn will encourage more physical activity.

“The city can now begin to make the infrastructure improvements we desperately need,” said Dr. Thomas Farley, Steps Leadership Team Chair. “Through street repair, added bike lanes and increased signage New Orleans will be a safer place to ride and walk. The people of this City will begin to have what they need to safely increase their physical activity and improve their health.”

Steps is equally excited that the people of New Orleans voted favorably for the bond as it provides \$36 million for the renovation of parks and playgrounds. Steps will work with

Friends of NORD in partnership with the City of New Orleans and civic, neighborhood and church groups to revitalize some 50 neighborhood playgrounds.

Playgrounds will be revitalized through a multi-step process including a collective effort to improve the safety and usability of the city's playgrounds in order to help promote playground use, maintain the revitalized playgrounds and evaluate the impact of the changes.

"We are in the middle of some very exciting changes here in New Orleans," said Carolyn Fernandez, Steps Program Director. "Thanks to the hard work of so many individuals and organizations, and the positive feedback from the voters we can create a healthy environment for our city's families to be active, safe and healthy."

Step Together New Orleans (*Steps*) is a community-based, public health initiative created to help New Orleanians live longer, healthier lives by reducing the burden of asthma, diabetes and obesity. A primary strategy of this initiative is to address two related risk factors – physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

Step Together New Orleans, a partnership of Louisiana Public Health Institute and the City of New Orleans Health Department, will implement a five-year community action plan to reduce health disparities and promote quality health care and prevention services.

The City of New Orleans was one of the initial seven large cities chosen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 2003 to be part of the ***Steps to a HealthierUS*** initiative.

For more information about **Steps**, call 301-9838 or visit the web site at

www.steptogethernola.org.

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