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Indian Health Service National Nutrition Month

March 31, 2004

“Healthy Habits for a Lifetime”

by

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Today we complete a month that has been designated since 1973 as National Nutrition Month by the American Dietetic Association. The nutrition education and information campaign this year, “Eat Smart to Stay Healthy,” focused attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating habits.

Throughout the year, there are 95 Indian Health Service nutrition and dietetics professionals and 135 tribal dietitians who run programs, conduct workshops and training sessions, meet with community health teams and leaders, and help providers get as much information as possible to American Indian and Alaska Native people about making healthy lifestyle choices. During this month we acknowledged their spirit of caring and I encourage all employees to continue to help them throughout the year by carrying the message of the benefits of eating healthy to our family, friends, and communities. Eating healthy is one of the major factors that can mean the difference between a life of activity and quality and one of escalating chronic, life-threatening conditions.

These IHS and tribal dietitians play a crucial role in community health promotion strategies, including obesity and diabetes prevention activities, as well as helping develop sustainable personalized nutrition programs. Through the IHS Nutrition and Dietetics Training Program, these exceptional employees provide training workshops to IHS and tribal community health workers so they can teach healthy heart lifestyle practices in their communities.

They also are contributing to the IHS efforts to partner with the National Institutes of Health to establish cardiovascular disease risk reduction intervention programs in Indian Country. This important program will conduct regional workshops to expand the skills community members need to prevent heart disease, including how to make simple, practical, and lasting nutritional and dietary changes that can help them reduce or eliminate their risk for heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

To the 230 tribal and IHS nutrition and dietetic professionals, and to those who assist them, thank you for the work you do to raise the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people to the highest level possible.

Thank you.